

V.

THE IRISH PILCHARD FISHERY.

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THE pilchard (*Sardina pilchardus* Walbaum) was an important fish in the economy of Cornwall some years ago, when exports of cured pilchards to Italy were of considerable value. A fishery for pilchards off the west coast of England, but mainly off the coast of Cornwall, has subsisted for many centuries, and Fox (1878) in an informative and interesting paper gives many references to the Cornish Pilchard Fishery in the State Papers and other historical records. The same species is also known from the Atlantic coasts of France, Portugal and Spain, and from the Mediterranean, where it is commonly called the *sardine*.

It is not generally realised that the pilchard also frequents Irish waters, where, at several periods in Irish history, it was subjected to an intense fishery at many places along the south and west coasts. Throughout the historical records of Ireland there is an abundance of information relating to this pilchard fishery, which has now fallen into disuse, and this paper is an attempt to follow its history from the beginning of the seventeenth century. Apart from purely historical considerations, the history of this fishery is at once interesting and instructive in that we are provided with information which will enable us to estimate what are the prospects for a successful revival of an Irish Pilchard Fishery in the twentieth century.

Longfield refers to the pilchard as one of the fish exported from Ireland in the sixteenth century, and Hore refers to the pilchard fishery off the south coast in the year 1591.¹ Before the seventeenth century, records of pilchards appear to be few, but, as will be seen later, there are many records of the great value of the sea-fisheries in regions along the south coast of Ireland, where the pilchard was later an important element

¹ A. K. Longfield, *Anglo-Irish Trade in the sixteenth century*. London, 1929, p. 49, and *History of the town and county of Wexford, Old and New Ross*, ed. J. H. Hore, London, 1900, p. 261.

in the fisheries. The locations of the various fisheries mentioned in the following account of the Irish Pilchard Fishery have been indicated in a series of sketch maps (Figs. 1 to 5), the first of which is a key to the others.

Seventeenth Century.

During the reign of James I, Sir James Ware stated that amongst the advantages enjoyed by Ireland were "her great and the plentiful fisheries of salmon, herrings and pilchards which, salted and barrelled, are every year exported for foreign ports and yield a considerable return to the merchants."² Robert Cogan, giving an opinion of the Customs of Ireland in 1611, remarks as regards Kinsale: "A poor town ruined by the late rebellion but one of the best harbours in the kingdom. It depends most upon the fishing of pilchards, herrings and hake which are taken in the harbour."³ Kinsale would, therefore, appear to have been a centre of a pilchard fishery at the beginning of the seventeenth century if not earlier, a fishery which, as we shall see, was of importance to the town at irregular intervals for many years to come.

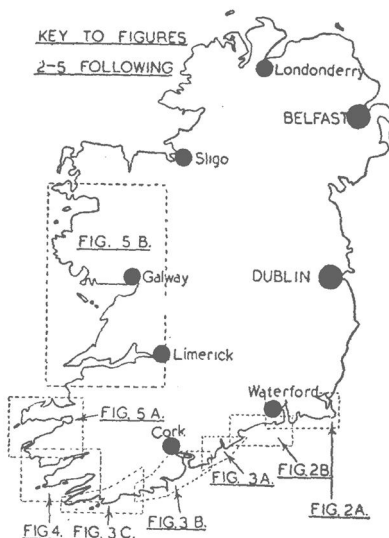


FIG. 1.

Sir Richard Boyle, First, and commonly called the Great Earl of Cork, of whom Townshend tells us, "Under his fostering care, comfortable

² H. F. Hore, *An inquiry into the legislation, control and improvement of the salmon and sea fisheries of Ireland*. Dublin, 1850, p. 43.

³ *Cal. Carew MSS.*, 1603-24, p. 176.

farmhouses sprang up in deserted villages, lonely sea bays were changed into harbours crowded with fishing smacks,"⁴ appears to have first become interested in the pilchard fishery about the year 1616. For April 16 of that year his diaries contain the following reference:—

Lent Ennys o driskoll xij¹¹ ster: to begin to sett up the pylcher ffyishing at Long Ilande & I paid him thereof in money ix¹¹ xv^s ster: & gave him my acquittance for xlv^s ster: being by him due to me for my Laste Easter Rent, with a warrant to take out of my woods in Sleight teag o Mahownes Lands tymber for their fishe presses and fyshe howses.⁵

Long Island mentioned by Boyle was most certainly the island of that name close to the present town of Schull, Co. Cork, as he was in partnership with Sir William Hull, second husband to his brother's widow, who had settled at Leam Con Castle near Crookhaven. Together, Townshend tells us, Sir William and Boyle worked this fishery in the neighbourhood of Crookhaven.⁶ The fisheries of this region were noted for their fecundity for many years. The dues formerly levied by O'Driscoll on all vessels coming to fish between Fastnet Rock, west of Cape Clear, and the Toe Head included:—

in money 19s. 2d., a barrel of flour, a barrel of salt, a hogshead of beer and a dish of fish three times a week from every boat, viz. Wednesday, Friday and Saturday and if they dry their fish in any part of the country they are to pay thirteen shillings for the rocks. That if any boat if they do chance to take a Hollybutt⁷ they must give it to the Lord for a ball of butter and if they conceal it from him for 24 hours they forfeit forty shillings to the Lord.

In addition, the Lord if he wanted to buy fish he got it at a cheaper rate, "two pence better cheap in every dozen white fish than the ordinary price there is."⁸ These were the dues of visiting fishermen, and there seems no doubt but that the abundance of the pilchard was one of the reasons which enabled the O'Driscoll for the time being to demand what was, for those days, very heavy tribute.

Boyle and the Hulls did not, however, restrict their activities to Crookhaven. In 1616, Townshend states, Boyle paid £6 to a ship builder to build a seine boat,⁹ and at the same time he was erecting salting and fish houses at Ardmore, Co. Waterford, where Boyle and the Hull family

⁴ Dorothea Townshend, *The life and letters of the Great Earl of Cork*. London, 1904, p. vii.

⁵ *Lismore Papers*, ed. A. B. Grosart, ser. I, i. 106. See also C. B. Gibson, *The history of the county and city of Cork*. London, 1861, ii, 522.

⁶ Townshend, p. 67.

⁷ Halibut—not a common fish then or at present around the Irish coast.

⁸ W. F. T. Butler, *Gleanings from Irish History*. Dublin, 1925, p. 167.

⁹ The seine boat was the fishing vessel used in the prosecution of the pilchard fishery (see page 101).

were setting up a fish-curing establishment.¹⁰ In the same year Boyle wrote the following memorandum:—

Delivered to Captain William Hull £20 as earnest money to buy casks for fumados,¹¹ upon an agreement to have half his fish to be taken the next season at Crookhaven in which he and I are to be partners and Captain Hull is to adventure £100 with me in my season's fishing at Ardmore.¹²

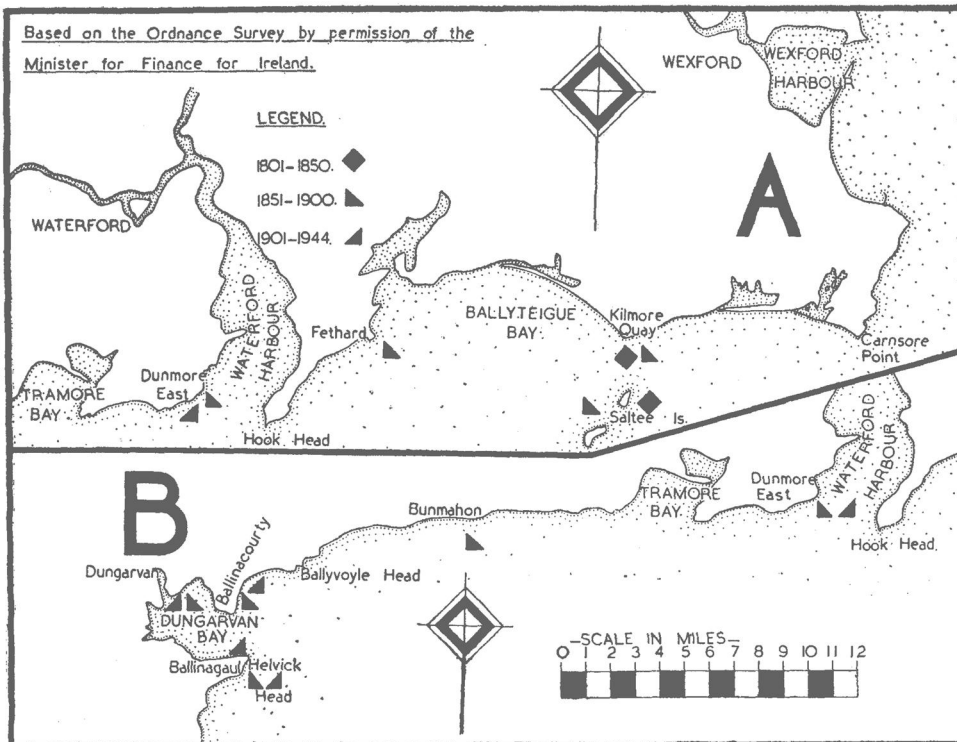


FIG. 2.

On 24 November, 1616, Boyle recorded in his diary:—

I delivered olliver John and Mr. waynmothe x¹¹ ster: towards the buying of a sayn (seine) to take pylchers with at Ardmoor and agreed with young davies to give him 20¹¹ ster: to be our hewer¹² there the next season and he to dyet himself and if god bless me with a plentiful ffyshing he is to be further considered.¹³

It would thus appear that apart from participating in the pilchard fishery himself Boyle encouraged others to do so also.

¹⁰ Townshend, p. 101.

¹¹ Fumados, Cured pilchards which had undergone a smoking process.

¹² Hewer (huer). One who directed the fishing boats from some point of vantage. He was able to see the shoals of pilchards clearly. The success of the fishing depended to a great extent on his ability to spot the shoals and direct the seine boats.

¹³ *Lismore Papers*, series I, i, 135.

In a document dealing with an inquiry into the conduct of one, Edward Hunt, customer of Cork Harbour, formerly preserved in the Public Record Office, Dublin, there is a mention of pilchards being exported from Kinsale and Castlehaven, both in Co. Cork. Unfortunately the transcript now available in the P.R.O. (No. 54, *Inq. Exch.*, 7 April, 1620; 1a, 48, 83) does not contain the account of the pilchard fishery which apparently this document originally contained. The references to pilchards are as follows:—

That the said George Tyrrie in September 1617 having leaden two ships one Hundred and ten tuns of pilchers or thereabouts at Kinsale and paied his Mâties Custom and impositions and the said Shipinge redie to depte were stayed by Sir Thomas Dutton Commander of the fforte of Kinsale and what demuradge and other costs the said George sustained thereby theie know not. That the said George Tyrrie in September 1618 having loaden abourde the Katherine of Corke in Castlehaven three score and five tuns of fumados' pilchers for which his Mâties Custome and Imposition hath as by the Cockett did appere.

These entries show clearly that the pilchard fishery was fairly prosperous in West Cork in the year 1617 and 1618.

On 16 September, 1619, Boyle bestowed on Mr. John Lancaster, parson and vicar of Ardmore, during his incumbency of the parish.

thone half of the tyethe pylcher and other fyshe to be taken in the bay or key of the dizart, which is parcel of thabbey of Molanna and discharged of tythes and I to reteyn the tyeths corn and all other tythes of the dizart.¹⁴

The "bay of dizart" is obviously Ardmore Bay, since the townland of Dysert includes the headland known as Ardmore Head.

On 30 July, 1621, the Lord Deputy and Council wrote to the Privy Council with reference to the state of the case between the merchant adventurers and Edward Davenant relative to pilchard fishing in Ireland.¹⁵ Nearly eleven months later the Privy Council referred to the case of Edward Davenant against the merchant adventurers for pilchard fishing off the island of Whiddy to the Lord Deputy.¹⁶ The fishing of Bantry Bay was the subject of much comment in the previous century. An account of the revenues of O'Sullivan Bere in the State Papers for 1587 stated—

the O'Sullivan for the time being liveth only by the sea and the commodity thereof, as his fishing, his wrecks and such like &c. And for the fishing it is a thing uncertain for some years if fishing do fall upon the coast, then Dunboye is worth much, if the fishing fail, it cannot yield profit. For the ships and boats,

¹⁴ *Lismore Papers*, series I, i, 230.

¹⁵ *Cal. S.P. Ire.*, 1615-1625, p. 332.

¹⁶ *Cal. S.P. Ire.*, 1615-25, p. 359.

the rents of them is but as the Lord and they can agree, according as the fishery do continue all the season of the year or fail, as sometimes it doth within one month &c.¹⁷

It seems probable that the main fishing referred to was that of the pilchard, which was of prime importance to Bantry at a later period in its history.

Apart from his interest in the actual fishery at or in the vicinity of Crookhaven, Boyle apparently possessed the tithes of pilchards at that port, as he records in his diary for 25 January, 1622: "I received of Sir Thomas Roper by thands of his servant Th^o. Champen xxx¹¹ ster: for the rent of the glebelands and tyeth pilehards of Crookhaven."¹⁸

In a paper written in 1623 on the state of Ireland,¹⁹ the remarks of the author on fisheries are of particular interest as regards the pilchard. He states—

Then what may be said of the fishing, which I persuaide me yields best customs or benefit to his Majesty of any? I am credibly informed that the taking of salmon there is above 2000 tons yearly; they take herrings as much, of pilchards more, of dry fish most of all; every ton yields £20 at least and no commodity so vendible abroad (p. 8).

There is no Kingdom in Europe enriched and blessed with like powerful means and ways as the realm of Ireland is for to bring in Spanish coin; for I have heard some Irish merchants affirm that were they strong in ships and able to undergo completely voyages into foreign lands they might transport from Ireland 20000 tons of pilchards, as much in herrings some years and near the same quantity of salmon (p. 29).

The figure for the possible exports of pilchards, 20,000 tons, is exceedingly large, and one is inclined to regard this as somewhat of an exaggeration. It is interesting to note that herrings were liable to fluctuations in the quantities available for export. In an undated State Paper belonging to the period 1615–25 entitled a *Project for fishing in Ireland*, it is stated:—

The northern seas afford the Hollanders but two sorts of fish, cod and herring. Ireland yields as great plenty of both besides these several fishes following:—pilchards the best in Europe, which are vented in the Straits; hake and cod much esteemed in Biscay²⁰

This again indicates the repute of the Irish Pilchard Fishery in the early seventeenth century.

That the Earl of Cork retained his interest in the pilchard fishery of

¹⁷ *Cal. S.P. Ire.*, 1586–88, p. 365. O'Sullivan apparently had similar dues to those exacted by O'Driscoll (see page 83, and Butler, p. 167) and he in turn paid dues to McCarthy Mor (Earl of Clancar) based on the number of vessels fishing in Bantry Bay (see *Cal. Carew MSS.*, 1515–74, p. 366, and Butler, p. 14).

¹⁸ *Lismore Papers*, series I, ii, 68.

¹⁹ *Advertisements for Ireland*, ed. George O'Brien. Dublin, 1923, pp. 8, 29.

²⁰ *Cal. S.P. Ire.*, 1615–25, p. 580.

West Cork in 1626 is obvious from a record in his diary for February 14 of that year, in which he wrote—

I granted thinheritance of the ploughland of carrinbeg²¹ in Ivagh (which I purchased of Dermod Ivade o Mahown) to Donnell o Mahown jun(ior) & his heires for ever, excepting and reserving to me and my heires forever the Habor, the Cove and the ffyshing of pilchers and all the ffyshe, and liberty to land my boats, netts and ffyshe and all other liberty to take same & dispose of the ffyshe etc.²²

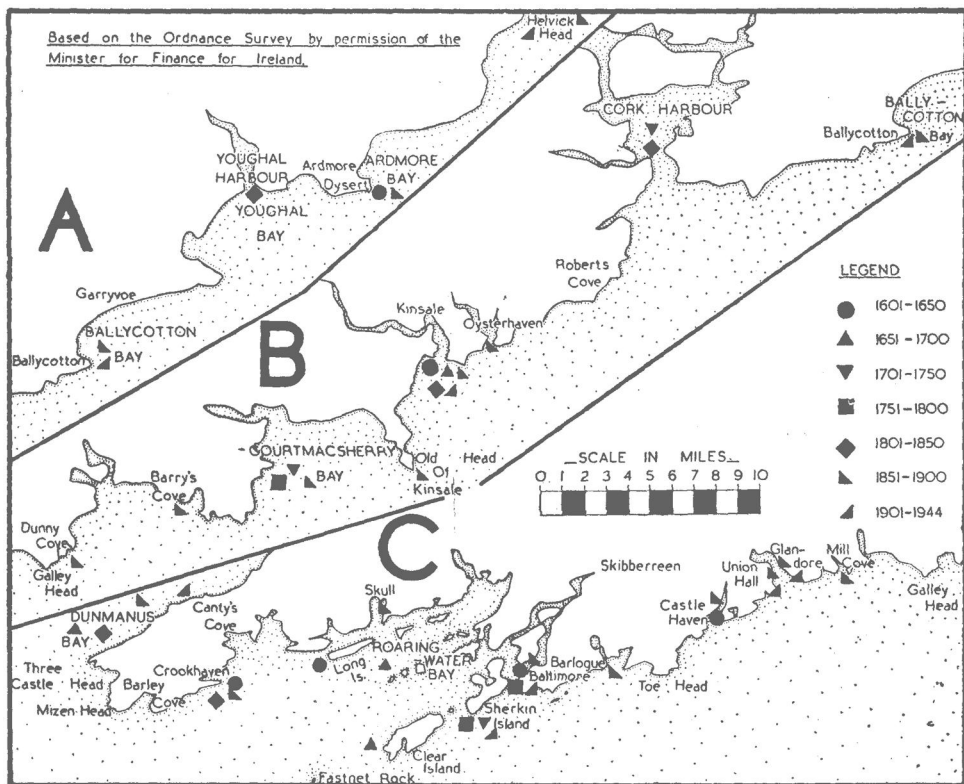


FIG. 3.

In the same year Galvin Silson, Vicar of Kilmacowock in the diocese of Cork, petitioned the Lord Primate, complaining that the tithes of pilchards had been withheld from him by Edward Davenant and John Snelling, and asked for the question to be settled according to ecclesiastical law.²³ The parish of Kilmacowock was probably that of Kilmacomogue, in which the town of Bantry was situated, as, as we have already seen, Edward Davenant was engaged in the pilchard fishery at Whiddy Island (see page 85).

²¹ Carrinbeg, the ancient name of a maritime district in West Cork.

²² *Lismore Papers*, series I, ii, p. 208.

²³ *Cat. S.P. Ire.*, 1625-1632, p. 133.

In the following year (1627) the journal of the captain of the prize ship the "St. James," which started from King's Road near Bristol, informs us that during her cruise off the coast of Ireland, a Flemish ship of 250 tons was seen on August 31 *en route* to Ireland to load pilchards for Venice.²⁴ There would appear, therefore, to have been catches of pilchards in either that year or the previous one. In 1629 the Lord President of Munster and others forwarded a certificate to the Lord Deputy stating that the "Greyhound" of Enckhusen in Holland had a commission from the Prince of Orange, that the owners and freighters belonged to Enckhusen, and that in the year 1627 the ship took pilchards from Crookhaven to Marseilles.²⁵ This is additional evidence of the existence of pilchard fishing in the year 1627. About the year 1628 a report on victualling in Ireland gave a figure of 7/- per 1000 for pilchards, which indicates that they were then available for sale.²⁶ A memorandum entitled *How to erect a Fishery upon the coasts of England, Scotland and Ireland*, prepared early in 1629, refers to the habit of the "Hollanders" and Italians to disburse

money beforehand to the fishermen of the West County and to take pilchers at a rate, afterwards to vent them, and commonly in Holland shipping; whither they return the profit they make of them, be it in money or in merchandise into Holland Again if a corporation had the management of the fishery and no interlopers allowed, they would be able to keep up the price of pilchers abroad. We are in the fortunate position that all the world cannot afford pilchers to serve those countries but in his Majesty's dominions. If we control the trade we control the prices.²⁷

The desire to control the pilchard fishery off the coasts of Great Britain and Ireland indicates the value placed on the native pilchard at that time.

By the year 1630 the Fort of Kinsale had apparently fallen into decay, and Sir Thomas Button gave as his reason for having it placed once again in a state of repair—

It stands where the greatest fishing is of pilchards, herring, hake and salmon and where the greatest provision is made for fishing for all the western parts, of any port in the West of Ireland.²⁸

It should be noted that the pilchard is given first place in this list of fish.

On 19 February, 1631, the Earl of Cork, who as we have seen had a considerable interest in the pilchard fishery, wrote to the English Council and stated with regard to a threatened invasion of Ireland—

²⁴ *Cal. S.P. Ire.*, 1625-32, p. 292.

²⁵ *Cal. S.P. Ire.*, 1625-32, p. 421.

²⁶ *Cal. S.P. Ire.*, 1647-60, p. 127.

²⁷ *Cal. S.P. Ire.*, 1647-60, p. 145.

²⁸ *The Council Book of the Corporation of Kinsale from 1652-1800*, ed. R. Caulfield. Guildford, 1879, p. xxxiii.

The pilchard fishery also may thereby and in all probability will be interrupted and his Majesty much hindered thereby in his customs and lastly which is not least considerable the kingdom may be thereby deprived of the benefit they may otherwise have of the importation of coyne, there having been some years £15,000 and in some other years £20,000 observed to have been imported into this kingdom for pilchards and most of the money coming from the French and Hollanders.²⁹

In the same year, on June 20, Baltimore had the misfortune of being sacked by Algerine pirates.³⁰ The Lords Justices writing on the subject soon after its occurrence, stated that the planters may be chased away by this terror, and with them "the fishers of pilchards who in some years have made £15,000 in some years £20,000."³¹ The Earl of Cork was perturbed about these events. He wrote in February, 1632, to the English Privy Council referring to the piratical raid on Baltimore by the Turks, and continued in the following strain:—

I, Lord Cork, hear on good authority that the Turks intend to surprise the whole southern coast next year distributing their fleet according to the strength of the different ports. This rumour has stopped trade on the south coast of Ireland. Three evils follow, the depeopling of the harbour towns, the cessation of the pilchard fishery which breeds men for the navy and increases the King's customs and the stoppage of the rapid flow of coin into the realm. On previous occasions 15,000£ or 20,000£ a year frequently came in in consequence of the pilchard fishery, mostly from the French and Hollanders.³²

This rumour, of which the Earl of Cork wrote, was probably brought to his notice by Sir Vincent Gooking.³³

From the foregoing details of this period, 1625–32, it would appear that the fishery for pilchards was fairly successful. In 1634 the fishery reached record heights, as Sir Richard Plumleigh on August 6 wrote to the Earl of Portland, Lord High Treasurer, that "the take of pilchards is the heaviest on record, a great harvest is expected and Parliament has given the King six subsidies."³⁴ When we realise the difficulty that the King had of getting the subsidies from Parliament at that period it is clear that the pilchard fishery must have been very prolific.

The success of the pilchard fishery no doubt lead to difficulties between the fishermen and the owners of the land near the sea. As will be seen later, the "huer" (hewer) or "condor" directed the fishing vessels from points of vantage on the land, and landowners attempted to take advantage of their position by levying a fine for trespass. This naturally

²⁹ Howard Fox, "Observations in further illustration of the history and statistics on the Pilchard Fishery." *Rep. Roy. Cornwall Poly. Soc.* 1878, p. 82.

³⁰ Charles Smith, *The antient and present state of the county and city of Cork.* Dublin, 1750, i, 279.

³¹ *P.R.I. rep. D.K.*, 20, p. 23.

³² *Cal. S.P. Ire.*, 1625–32, p. 645. See also Gibson, ii, 521.

³³ Smith, 1750, p. 279.

³⁴ *Cal. S.P. Ire.*, 1633–47, p. 68.

impeded fishing, and in the year 1632 an Act of the Irish Parliament³⁵ was passed permitting huers to use the points of vantage. Although this Act was repealed by the Fisheries (Ireland) Act of 1842, the same provisions, in which specific mention was made of the pilchard, were re-enacted in that Act.³⁶ O'Grady attributes the passing of the Act of 1636 to the activities of Strafford.³⁷

According to Pinkerton, pilchards were exported from Ireland in 1637.³⁸ For the next three years there do not appear to be any references to pilchards in Ireland in the historical records. In January, 1641, Sir George Radcliffe, in answering the remonstrances of the Committee of the Irish House of Commons, stated that the shortage of coin in the kingdom was due to the failure of the pilchard fishery.³⁹ This complaint about the pilchard fishery was referred to by O'Brien.⁴⁰ Apparently the year 1641 was more successful, as 1263 tons of pilchards were exported.⁴¹ About this time a cousin of the Earl of Cork sent a ship from Malaga laden with wine and fruit, asking him to dispose of the cargo and refill the ship with hides, tallow, pipe-staves or *pilchards*.⁴²

For a number of years from 1641 there are no records of the pilchard fishery in Ireland, as the people were for the most part engaged in one of the most bloody wars of their history. At the Restoration, however, the pilchard fishery was resumed. An Order in Council made in 1663 ordained that no foreigner should fish in Irish waters during the pilchard season, but this regulation appears to have been more honoured in the breach than the observance thereof.⁴³ As far as one can judge, the pilchard fishery was not very successful in the year 1665, as the exports from Ireland were comparatively low, namely, 332 tons.⁴⁴ The exports showed some improvement by the year 1669, when exports amounted to 795 tons.⁴⁴ Economic conditions, other than the success of the pilchard fishery, probably also played a part in reducing these exports. At Kinsale, in the year 1665, one of the Southwells was said to have obtained

³⁵ *10 Car. I, sess. 2, Cap. xxiv, Stat. Ire.*, ii, 82. An Act for the better Preservation of fishing in the counties of Dublin, Wicklow, Wexford, Waterford, Cork, Kerry, Clare, Gallway, Mayo, Sligo and all other countrys and places within the Realme of Ireland, and the Dominions thereof adjoining to the Sea Coast and for the Reliefe of Balkors, condors, and Fishermen against Malitious Suites.

³⁶ *5 & 6 Vict. Cap. 106*, section 4. See H. D. Conner and E. C. Farran, *The Fisheries (Ir.) Act, 1842 to 1901*. Dublin, 1908, p. 7.

³⁷ H. O'Grady, *Strafford and Ireland*. Dublin, 1923, p. 377.

³⁸ W. Pinkerton, "Contributions towards a history of Irish Commerce." *U.J.A.*, series I, iii, 188.

³⁹ *Cal. S.P. Ire.*, 1633-47, p. 255.

⁴⁰ George O'Brien, *The economic history of Ireland in the 17th century*. Dublin, 1919, p. 82.

⁴¹ *Cal. S.P. Ire.*, 1669-70, p. 54. See also O'Brien, p. 82, and O'Grady, p. 377.

⁴² Townshend, p. 401.

⁴³ *Cal. S.P. dom*, 1671, p. 239. See also O'Brien, p. 193.

⁴⁴ *Cal. S.P. Ire.*, 1669-70, p. 54, and O'Brien, p. 193.

£1300 worth of this fish in one haul of the net,⁴⁵ so that the fishery was far from a complete failure in the year 1665, at least at one place on the Irish coast. The Southwells, who originally settled at Kinsale, had apparently re-established a pilchard fishery in the town.⁴⁶

On 18 April, 1671, Robert Southwell, of the family just mentioned, who was Souvereign of Kinsale, an office rather akin to the Mayor, wrote to the Lord Lieutenant as follows:—

A French ship arrived here last Saturday of about 350 tons burden. About thirty or forty French fishing boats are come on this coast, each of thirty or forty tons burden, having very long strings or rafts of nets, which they call mackerel nets. But they have both mackerel and herring nets; the mackerel they place uppermost next the ropes and the herring under in the same raft and joined together. Each boat having 1000 nets and about thirty or forty men, carries out in length almost two miles. All their men are armed with muskets and firelocks. By their long and unlawful nets they break and destroy the great shoals of fish on this coast to the great destruction of the fishing trade here, and particularly of the pilchard fishing in the West of Ireland set forth at very great charges of the undertakers and of the hookers and fishermen of this town consisting of sixty or eighty boats etc.⁴⁷

The Lord Lieutenant was against precipitous action, as is shown by his letter to Lord Arlington on April 22, and he considered that it was advisable to ignore these vessels rather than to expose his men to an affront by such a force of armed ships.⁴⁷ In response to Southwell's communication, however, an Order was made declaring that notice should be given to the foreigners not to fish on the coast during the pilchard fishing season, from June 1 to October 31. Failure to observe these conditions would render an offender liable to have his boat and gear confiscated. The commanders of all ships of the Navy were to assist in the maintenance of these regulations. Further, the magistrates of Kinsale and other fishing places were ordered to put down "unlawful practices by private boats of their towns such as the unlawful nets and fishing at undue times and places."⁴⁸ Charles II, writing to the Lord Lieutenant on 13 May, 1671, about the unlawful fishing, ordered the close time to start on April 1 instead of June 1.⁴⁹ The complaints of the use of drift nets during the pilchard season were echoed elsewhere in Ireland and England, the seine-net fishermen believing that the drift-net fishing for pilchards destroyed the fishery. There was some justice in this complaint, as the shoals were broken up, thus rendering their capture by the seine boats more difficult. Robert

⁴⁵ *The Carte Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library, Oxford*, ed. C. W. Russell and J. P. Prendergast. London, 1871, p. 16; *Council Book of Kinsale*, p. liii.

⁴⁶ *Carte MSS.*, p. 16.

⁴⁷ *Cal. S.P. dom.*, 1671, p. 196. This was, however, a little too early in the year to have interfered with the pilchard fishery since it did not usually start until July.

⁴⁸ *Cal. S.P. dom.*, 1671, p. 197.

⁴⁹ *Cal. S.P. dom.*, 1671, p. 239.

Southwell was apparently not satisfied with the progress of the pilchard fishery generally at Kinsale, because on 14 June, 1672, he wrote to a Mr. Reeve of Rotterdam with a view to persuading some Dutch fishermen to settle at Kinsale and form a fishing company there.⁵⁰ It must be mentioned that at this period the Dutch were probably considered Europe's most proficient fishermen.

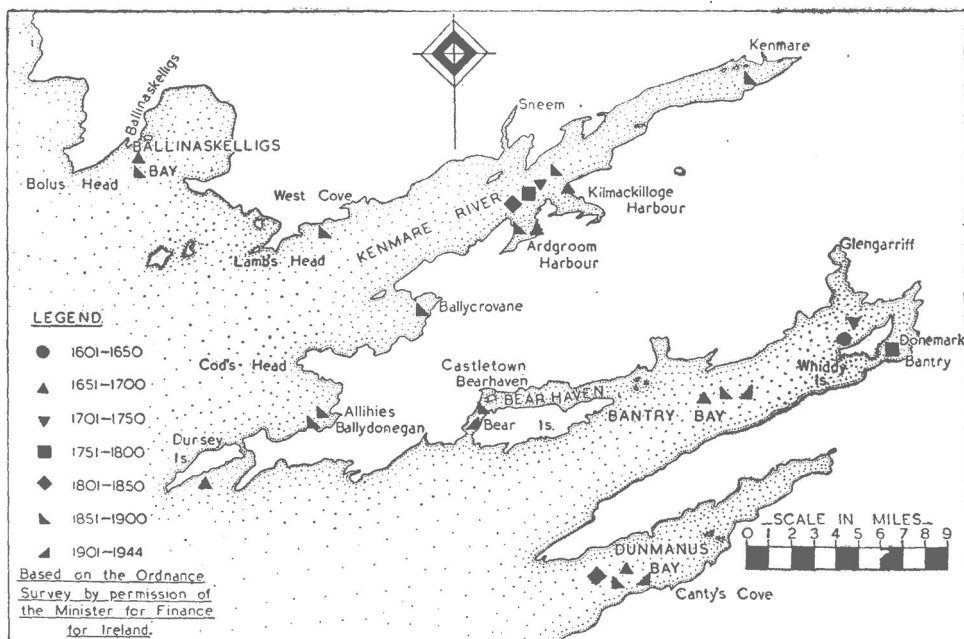


FIG. 4.

Sir William Petty, who was well known as the author of the so-called "Down Survey," writing in 1672, stated as regards the pilchard fishery—

There are in the West of Ireland, about 20 gentlemen, who have engaged in the Pilchard fishing and have among them all about 160 seines, wherewith they sometimes take about 4000 hogsheads of Pilchards per Ann. worth about £10,000. Cork, Kinsale and Bantry are the best places for eating of fresh fish, tho' Dublin is not or need not be ill supplied with the same.⁵¹

Petty also estimated that about 1000 men and women would be employed in taking 5000 hogsheads of pilchards.⁵² This interest of Petty's was not merely academic, because he had himself established a pilchard fishery at several places, mainly in County Kerry, in or about the year 1672,

⁵⁰ *Council Book of Kinsale*, p. liii.

⁵¹ Sir William Petty, *Political Survey of Ireland*. London, 1719, p. 109.

⁵² Petty, p. 109.

notably at Kilmakilloge Harbour, Ballinaskelligs and Dursey Island⁵³ (see Fig. 4). The Marquis of Lansdowne, who was a descendant of Petty's, through his daughter Anne, nine years ago gave a full account of the Kilmakilloge Fishery.⁵⁴ The establishment of a pilchard fishery entailed more than the capture of the fish, and necessitated the erection of fish houses and presses. Pilchards were packed in cellars called "palices" or "palaces." According to Lansdowne, the palices erected by Petty had thick walls to keep out the heat and cold. One of Petty's palices was situated at Bunaw, where a palice, probably the successor of Petty's, was in existence until recent times. The fish house at Bunaw has now been reconstructed as a dwelling-house, but the name has been retained by a local family of O'Sullivan's.

At Kilmakilloge Sir William Petty apparently started activities in the summer of 1672, when, according to the Marquis of Lansdowne, he sent nets and other gear from Dublin, and at the same time obtained through a Mr. Beecher of Aghadown the services of one Adam Goold, as a local manager or "Clerk of the Palice." In September, 1672, Petty wrote to his agent, John Rutter, "The work of the day is about our fish and salt and casks. You cannot but hear that the Caps (Pirates) are very bissie abroad therefore take heed how you trade by sea."⁵⁴ During the next month Petty wrote again, stating that he understood that there were "102 hogsheads and 20 in bulk and 28 of last year's in all 150." This suggests that the fishery had been prosecuted in the neighbourhood even as early as 1671. At the same time a fishery in the neighbouring harbour of Ardgroom was apparently carried on. The pilchard fishery in 1672 must have been fairly successful, because on September 20 seven merchants petitioned the King and Privy Council for a convoy for several ships in Ireland laden with pilchards, etc., for the Mediterranean. They stated that the season had approached when ships from England and Ireland with pilchards, etc., go to their markets, and "should they stay longer the fish would perish to the petitioners great loss."⁵⁵ Again, Thomas Burrowes, writing to James Hickes from Kinsale, reported that in two nights in July, 1672, 20 boat loads of pilchards had been taken.⁵⁶

Fishing for pilchards was continued by Petty in 1673, and he noted that he was doubtful if he could prevent others from fishing in Kilmakilloge Harbour. He recommended his agent, John Rutter, to send the "old fish," i.e. fish of the previous season, to France or Portugal in a small vessel and return with salt in exchange. Rutter at the close of

⁵³ Herbert Wood, "Sir William Petty and his Kerry Estate." *R.S.A.I.Jn.*, lxiv, 23.

⁵⁴ Marquis of Lansdowne, *Glanerought and the Petty-Fitz Maurices*, 1937. London, p. 30 fol.

⁵⁵ *Cal. S.P. dom.*, 1672, p. 636.

⁵⁶ *Cal. S.P. dom.*, 1672, p. 353.

the 1673 season furnished the followed account of the seine fishery during the summer of that year as follows:—

Sayners Wages	...	...	...	...	...	40	9	0
Woemen's Wages	...	...	...	...	...	2	14	2½
Hewers, Carpenters, Coopers, Clerk	...	...	...	...	...	46	10	8
Building a new sayne boat, raising cellars, making defence for the palices against the sea	...	...	...	...	...	15	4	9
Total	...	...	...	...	...	104	18	7½

Salt and goods had been bought at Kinsale; these were carefully stored and the boats drawn up into the boat-houses. The agent, Rutter, was apparently not satisfied with the seines, and asked his employer for a "Drift Sayne" for the next season, but this did not meet with approval, as Petty replied:—

As for ye Drift Sayne I am much discouraged for that I received nothing from Kerry no not so much as my rent, nor see when I shall. Yett will try again if you advise and if times cleare up. Wee seem safer from ye Irish than wee have been this 7 yeare.⁵⁴

This might be accepted as evidence that the pilchard fishing was not at all successful in Kerry in the year 1673; but as will be seen later, there is some doubt as to this, for it appears that the "Clerk of the Pallice," Adam Goold, had falsified the accounts to his own advantage.

Whatever had been Rutter's advice in 1673 Petty again wrote early in 1674 complaining of the lack of success in the fishery and in disposing of the fish when taken. He was willing to continue one more year, but he was determined against drift nets, as will be seen from the following passage from a letter he wrote in May, 1674:—

I am indifferent whether to proceed or not. Nevertheless I am contented to trust him (Goold, "Clerk of the Pallice") one yeare more in ye matter, if you think fit, forasmuch as it will be an employment to ye people who otherwise will be troubled to pay their rent. Wherefore I say again, buy those things which Mr. Goold wrote for as necessary to carry on this season, as ye others were, without any new tackling or Drift netts etc. till I am neerer ye place.⁵⁴

The season was, however, again disappointing to Petty, and Goold wrote to him suggesting that improvements should be introduced or the fishery disposed of to other persons. His suggestions included the introduction of foreigners, "able sayners from our southern coast, who might breede initiative emulation of industry, the country people being generally addicted to idlenesse."⁵⁴ In the following March, Petty wrote from Dublin:—

As for ye Fishing, have the Pallice and craft viewed and inventoried. Try whether those who have Ardgroome will take Kilmacologe also, or sett Ardgroome to us. Now the letting of Ardgroome is in the power of one Mr. John Davies under the Earl of Anglesey. Mr. Gwin, my Lord Anglesey's agent in Dublin can tell you all concerning it and will upon my account if you speak with him. If you let the Pallice, make provision for employing the tenants of Toysiste.⁵⁴

The Ardgroom Fishery would, therefore, appear to have been operated during the period Petty worked that at Kilmakilloge. Petty evidently considered that the operation of these two fisheries under one management might make for more success.

In 1675 Petty was engaged on important business in London, and he sent his wife to Kerry to inspect his estates there and generally put his affairs in order. Amongst other things, she was told to see if she could "lett the fishing pallice, craft and salt at a rent of perhaps £50 or £60 per annum, the taker to leave all as good as he find it."⁵⁴ In addition, she was told to consider "that Beecher will be security for Adam Goold in Kerry, in case there bee occasion to employ him."⁵⁵ Apparently Petty already had his suspicions regarding the honesty of his "Clerk of the Pallice," which were later to be accepted by his wife also. Lady Petty, who was a shrewd business woman, visited the Kerry estates in June, 1675, and stayed there for some time. On June 19, she took from Adam Goold, a bond of £300 as security for the faithful performance of his duties in connection with the fishing pallice and sundry other matters. Three days later she interviewed one Coppithorne, a hewer formerly employed in Petty's fisheries, who gave details of Goold's dishonesty in disposing of the products of this fishery to his own advantage. Goold or Gold, as he is sometimes called, attempted to refute these charges but without success. Despite this Goold was engaged for the season, because, as Lady Petty said in her diary—

- 1) I could not gett one more knowing in that affaire, being upon a pinch.
- 2) The fewd 'twixt him, the Heases, cooper and Copsythorne will a little limitt his knavery for this summer. Besides haveing equall men of all sorts, boats, seynes &c. wee shall have equality in losse or gaine.
- 3) Combination 'twixt the Heases and a new one (Clerk of the Pallice) was to be feared, for which care is taken.⁵⁶

It is clear from this information that Petty was in partnership with a family called Hease, with whom Lady Petty made an agreement on 21 June, 1675, for the conduct of the Petty's fisheries in Kenmare Bay, at Ballinaskelligs and off Dursey Island.⁵⁹ Lady Petty covenanted to build a fish pallice at Ballinaskelligs. Before completing the business connected with the fishery Lady Petty made a new agreement with Adam Goold. Apparently in the year 1675 the pilchard fishery was more satisfactory than in the previous years, at least as far as Petty was concerned. It is interesting to note that seine nets of the type introduced by Petty into Kenmare and Ballinaskelligs Bays are still used for the capture of salmon in those localities. In fact they are the only nets of this type used for the capture of salmon in the whole of Ireland, and are, no doubt, the lineal descendants of Petty's seines.

⁵⁴ Wood, p. 27.

⁵⁵ Wood, pp. 30-1.

⁵⁶ Wood, pp. 32-5,

That the pilchard fishery was fairly prosperous elsewhere in Ireland in 1675 seems probable, as Hugh Acland, writing to Williamson from Truro in Cornwall on July 26, stated that a vessel from Ireland had met great quantities off the Irish coasts.⁶⁰ Some large catches were made in Cornwall a few days later, as it was reported on August 2 from Falmouth that 1000 hogsheads had been taken in the previous week.⁶⁰ In the month of November in the same year Hodges, writing to Stawell on the proposal to make Kinsale a "free port," remarks that the town "lies convenient for the herrings and other fishings, especially the fishings between Great Britain and Ireland and for the pilchard fishings."⁶¹

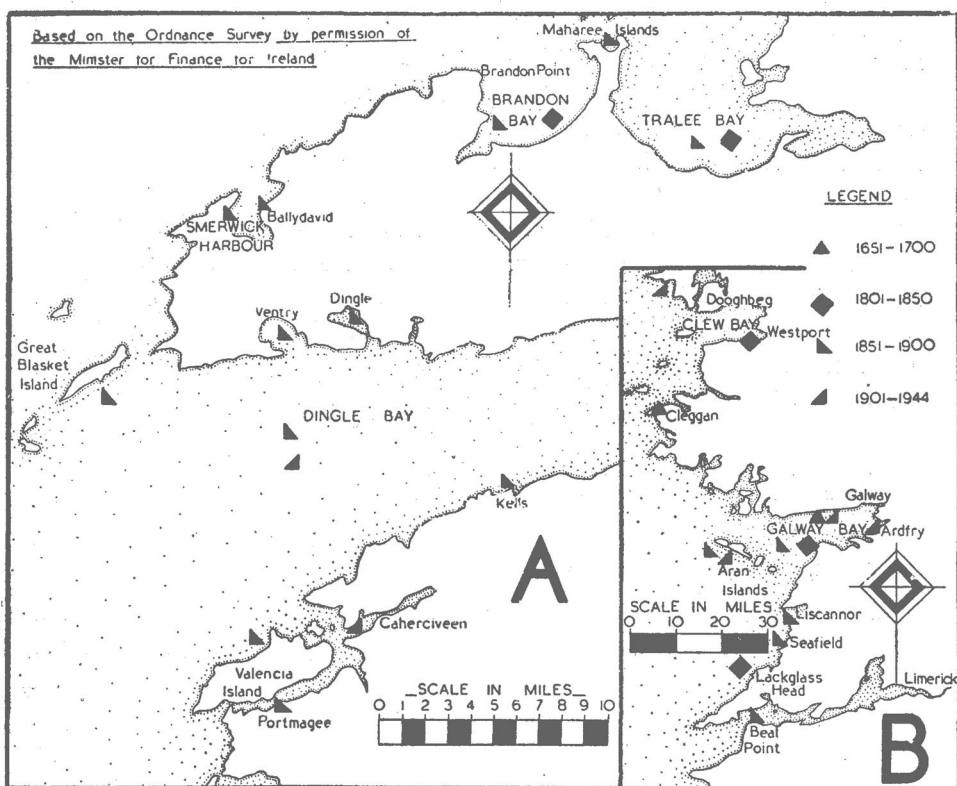


FIG. 5.

Roberts in 1677 gives a very favourable view of the Irish pilchard trade at that time. He says: "Herrings are caught and accounted the best, as also pilchards in August, September and October and then vented to Spain, France, and into the Streights of Gibraltar."⁶²

⁶⁰ *Cal. S.P. dom.*, 1675-76, pp. 230, 243.

⁶¹ *Anal. Hib.* xv. 222.

⁶² — Roberts, *The Merchant's Map of Commerce*, 1677, quoted by Pinkerton, p. 192.

In the year 1681 the pilchard fishery was apparently in full swing at Kinsale, since the Duke of Ormond on April 22, having dined at Sir Robert Southwell's, is said to have seen some "trials of the pilchard fishing" in the afternoon "with which he was very much entertained."⁶³

After 1675 Petty continued to be interested in the pilchard fishery, for on 30 August, 1683, he recorded having "treated" with Philip Hease about the fishing for the following season.⁶⁴ Heretofore we have been dealing with the pilchard fishery along the coasts of counties Kerry, Cork and Waterford, and it is, therefore, doubly interesting to find references for the year 1684 of pilchards in the seas adjacent to county Galway. O'Flaherty, who wrote his book on *H-Iar Connaught* in 1684, stated that the sea off the Connemara coast was plentifully stocked with a number of fish, including the pilchard (p. 11 fol.).⁶⁵ He also stated (p. 118) that "Within Ardolen, Inisark and Bofin isles is Blackrock haven whereby the continent of Cloggin there is a pilchard fishery and an ayrie of hawkes." Blackrock haven is obviously Cleggan Bay, which in more recent years was the seat of a prosperous mackerel fishery. O'Flaherty's work has all the appearances of being accurate, and as he resided in Connemara for a considerable part of his life, there is no reason why we should not accept his statements at their face value.

In a manuscript description of Cork written by Sir Richard Cox about the year 1685 he referred to the pilchard fishery in the barony of Carbery in the following words:—

Carbry is the largest barony in Ireland and therefore divided into East and West is very rugged course and mountainous especially in the West which is pritty well inhabited by reason of the pilchard fishing on the coast thereof.⁶⁶

The region referred to by Cox, namely, that of Dunmanus and Roaring Water Bays, has already been noted as the seat of a pilchard fishery. Cox did not, however, mention pilchards in his section on Bantry Bay.

In 1686 Petty instructed Orpen, his principal agent at Kenmare, to continue the pilchard fishery, which was apparently done, but with what success one cannot record. During the next year, however, Orpen reported the capture of fifty-five hogsheads of herrings and pilchards, which failed to find a purchaser.⁶⁷

Sir Richard Cox, who has already been referred to as the author of a manuscript paper about 1685, was responsible for another manuscript

⁶³ F. H. Tuckey, *The County and City of Cork Remembrancer*. Cork, 1837, p. 109.

⁶⁴ Wood, p. 39.

⁶⁵ Roderick O'Flaherty, *A chorographical description of West or H-Iar Connaught* Ed. J. Hardiman. Dublin, 1846.

⁶⁶ S. P. Johnston, "On a manuscript description of the city and county of Cork, cir. 1685, written by Sir Richard Cox." *R.S.A.I.Jn.*, xxxiii (2nd Ser.), 359.

⁶⁷ Lansdowne, p. 67.

description of county Cork dating from the year 1687.⁶⁸ Dealing with the islands of Sherkin and Cape Clear, he stated—

In the island of Sherkin alias Inisherkin, stands the old castle of Dunolong and an abbey for Franciscans built by Florence O'Driscoll, anno 1460. Two leagues to the west hereof in the ocean stands the island of Cape Clear, the most southern part of Ireland, and famous for pilchard fishing as all the coast hereabouts is (p. 169).

Referring to Dunmanus Bay, he further stated:—"This bay is well stocked with pilchards and other fish, which occasions great resort of fishermen there at the proper seasons" (p. 170).

In 1689 George Phillips of Limavady in a letter to the English Parliament wrote—

If men (as justly they may) become doubtful, scrupulous and incredulous when I make mention of the extraordinary Pilchard fishing in the South and the Herring fishing in the North, my credit will certainly run a great risque, and my veracity be suspected, when I relate the wonders of the deep, and come to speak of the prodigious fishings for Salmon and Eels, in the rivers of Lough Foyle and the Bann. Six thousand barrels of Pilchards were made up in one year in the County Cork; in Connaught the quantities taken are so great that, not having salt, they put them in heaps and manure the land The cargoes of Salmon, Herrings, Pilchards, Eels and other fish made up yearly in Ireland, and transported into several ports in Spain, to Venice and all the ports of the Mediterranean Sea, would startle common belief. I have heard from faithful relation, that in the South of Ireland they made in a year near eight hundred Tuns of Pilchards. A person of great quality (whose judgment and credit no man will dispute) did aver to me that in one season £16,000 was paid for the Pilchards taken on the South side⁶⁹ of Cork and the most of it by Sir John Frederick of London.⁷⁰

Petty's colony at Kenmare with the pilchard fishing were disturbed by passing events in 1689. The establishment of the pilchard fishery by Petty was referred to in a pamphlet dealing with the times,⁷¹ and later in 1694 Richard Orpen, who was then agent to Lady Shelbourne, Sir William Petty's widow, refers again to the pilchard fishery.⁷²

The Archbishop of Dublin, writing in 1726⁷³ on the pilchard fishery, stated that prior to 1688 there was good fishing for pilchards on the south coast of Ireland, "but since the fight in Bantry Bay, between some of

⁶⁸ Sir Richard Cox, "Regnum Corcagiense; A description of the kingdom of Cork." Ed. Robert Day. *Cork Hist. Soc. Jn.*, viii (2nd Ser.), pp. 65-83, 156-179.

⁶⁹ South side of Cork, e.g. West Cork and Kerry.

⁷⁰ George Phillips, "The interest of England in the preservation of Ireland." *U.J.A.*, series I, viii, 309 fol. See also O'Brien, p. 195.

⁷¹ "An exact relation of the persecutions, robberies, and losses sustained by the Protestants of Killmare, in Ireland, in 1689," ed. J. F. Fullan. *Cork Hist. Soc. Jn.*, ix (2nd Ser.), 175. Lord MacCauley based his vivid account of what happened at Kenmare in 1689 on this pamphlet, see MacCauley's *History of England*. London, 1889, i, 722.

⁷² Richard Orpen, "The London Master or the Jew detected." *Cork Hist. Soc. Jn.*, viii (2nd Ser.), 207.

⁷³ Boate, Molyneux and others, *A natural history of Ireland*. Dublin, 1726, p. 192.

the fleet under Sir George Rook and the French in 1689, the pilchards, I understand have not been seen on the coast.” He attributed the disappearance of the pilchard to the shock produced by firing of guns, observing “that some gentlemen having provided a yacht for their pleasure and firing their guns frequently in the bay of Dublin the herring fishing in the bay failed entirely that season.” De Latocnaye, a Frenchman, who visited Ireland in either 1796 or 1797, also referred to the same phenomenon.⁷⁴

Bishop Dive Downes, who was appointed to the Sees of Cork and Ross in 1699, made a Visitation of his diocese soon after his appointment, and in the diary of the tour made by him he referred to the pilchard fishery of Bantry Bay in the following terms:—“Pilchers are generally in the bay heretofore; few of late.”⁷⁵ This statement bears out the remarks of both the Archbishop of Dublin and de Latocnaye on the subject.

Eighteenth Century.

A complaint from Sir John Rogerson relative to the duties on the importation of barrel staves was the subject of a communication from Lord Jersey to the Treasury on 8 January, 1700. The complainants maintained that this import duty on barrel staves acted as a prohibition and compelled the use of native Irish timber, which had almost disappeared through over-exploitation. In consequence—

casque is become so scarce that they are risen to treble the rates, to the great prejudice of the trade of Ireland, which consists chiefly of goods exported in cask; as tallow, beef, pork, butter, salmon, herrings, pilchards etc. which pay considerable duties to his Majesty.⁷⁶

For the next seventeen years there were no reports of the Irish pilchard fishery. Whether or not this was due to the absence of the pilchard from these coasts it is difficult to say. There is a reference to pilchards for the year 1718 in the *Council Book of the Corporation of the City of Cork*⁷⁷ as follows:—

13th March 1718. Whereas John Power, Deputy Water bailiff, took from Mr. Dan^l Perse, some herrings and some pilchers for the Mayor's duties having processed him, ordered, that the said Power be defended and Mr. Hoare see the Recorder and other Council.

This indicates that there were some captures of pilchards in Cork Harbour in either 1717 or 1718, but probably in the former.

⁷⁴ M. de Latocnaye, *Rambles through Ireland by a French emigrant*. Cork, 1798, i, p. 168.

⁷⁵ “Bishop Dive Downes Visitation of his Diocese, 1619,” ed. T. A. Lunham. *Cork Hist. Soc. Jn.*, xix (2nd Ser.), 71.

⁷⁶ *Cal. S.P. dom.*, 1699–70, pp. 349–50.

⁷⁷ Ed. R. Caulfield, Guildford, 1876, p. 404.

Giving evidence before an Inquiry at Bantry in 1835, a Mr. Jenkins stated that he had seen the books of a Mr. Meade, who prosecuted the fisheries at Bantry Bay from 1730 to 1745, which showed an enormous export of pilchards at that time. "One invoice was for 6000 barrels at one shipment. There were 16 seans divided amongst four owners."⁷⁸ In some years during the "thirties" of the eighteenth century the pilchard fishing would appear to have been fairly prosperous. The exports in the years 1734 and 1738 from Ireland were 2595 and 2754 hogsheads respectively, which paid about £200 duty each year. By 1740, however, the exports had fallen to 366 hogsheads.⁷⁹ In the year 1737 (December 16) Sir Richard Cox presented a report in the Irish House of Commons from the Committee of Inquiry into the state of the fisheries of Ireland. The report recommended legislation to the effect that

any person in whose custody any pilchards shall be found, within one mile of a settled fishery and having no fishing craft of his own, unless he can prove before two Justices of the Peace that he bought the same or otherwise got them lawfully shall be liable to pay 10s over and above the value of said pilchards to the poor of the parish.⁸⁰

Leave was given to introduce a Bill to this effect, but it does not appear to have been done. The obvious intention of this proposed legislation was to prevent the larceny of pilchards from the fish "palices," which were often situated in lonely places.

Charles Smith, who will be referred to later as the author of an important survey on counties Cork and Kerry, wrote a book on county Waterford, which was completed by the year 1745. In this he states that there was no pilchard fishery off the Waterford coast, "yet it is no way improbable that they visit us, as well as those parts of the Counties of Cork and Kerry, where they are yearly taken in vast quantities."⁸¹ Apart from records of the activities of the Earl of Cork at Ardmore, we have no other references to pilchard fishings in County Waterford before the year 1746.

Arthur Young, who visited Ireland in the "seventies" of the eighteenth century, dealt with the fisheries of Kenmare Bay. He reported that considerable preparations had been made for fishing. "Many persons have put themselves to considerable expense about it but without success, except 33 years ago when the pilchards came in and have never been here since."⁸² It would appear, therefore, that in the year 1747 the pilchard

⁷⁸ *Report of the Commissioners of Inquiry into the State of Irish Fisheries*, 1836, p. 142.

⁷⁹ *Common's Jn., Ire.*, 1796, vii, celviii. See also Edward Wakefield, *An account of Ireland, Statistical and Political*. London, 1812, ii, 132.

⁸⁰ *Common's Jn., Ire.*, 1796, iv, 258.

⁸¹ C. Smith, *The antient and present state of the county and city of Waterford*. Dublin, 1774, p. 270. The first edition was published in the year 1746.

⁸² Arthur Young, *A tour in Ireland*. Dublin, 1780, ii, 89.

visited Kenmare Bay in great numbers, but was virtually absent for the succeeding thirty-three years.

In the year 1750 Smith published his survey of county Cork, and he dealt in detail with the pilchard fishery at Bantry. It is worth while quoting *in extenso*, since he gives an accurate idea of the methods of fishing used in this locality, a method which, incidentally, was followed elsewhere in Ireland and in Cornwall. Smith wrote⁸³—

A few years ago, when Pilchards frequented this bay, it (Bantry) was a very thriving town, but for want of imployment is again fallen into decay. Near it stood a Franciscan abbey, founded Anno 1460 by Dermot O'Sullivan, now entirely demolished. In many creeks round this bay are several fish palaces, as they are called, built for saving, preserving and salting of Pilchards, of which commodity several thousand pounds worth have been sent from hence to Spain, Portugal and Italy; but of late years there has not a single Pilchard appeared on the coast.

Elsewhere he continues⁸⁴—

The pilchard fishery in Bantry Bay and other western shores of this county began generally about St. James's day on the first dark in July; for the first 3 months they were large, fat and full of oil, and were saved with difficulty, being darker and worse coloured than those taken in the winter months, and less prized in foreign markets, notwithstanding they afforded more profit, having a much greater quantity of oyl. The fishery held till the end of the year; six hundred barrels of those fish have been included together in one net. Nothing is more certain than the Pilchard are very sharp of hearing, for it has been well known that a shoal, or as the Fishermen call it a school of Pilchards, have quitted a bay upon firing a single shot, and have been from the high grounds (whence they are very visible by their shining bright in the water) seen to run in great confusion, even at the voice of the hewer, when they were quiet before, and thunder drives them to sea.

Pilchards are taken either by day or night, but mostly in the day, by means of hewers placed on the adjacent high grounds above the bays. The nets are from 100 to 140 fathom long, and from 6 to 9 fathom deep; the net being shot or dropt into the sea, they surround the fish having 2 boats to attend them, one of which is called the Seine boat and the other the follower. The Pilchard being thus inclosed between the 2 boats, by drawing both ends of the net or poles together, they begin to haul up the net by the foot rope, which draws or purses up the net, and brings the bottom and the top of it together, this is called tucking the net, then by means of oval baskets which they call *maons*, they empty the net of the fish into their boats. The fish are brought out of the boats in large baskets and laid in the fish-house (which they call a Palace) in the following manner. They first cover the pavement with salt, which is made so as to have a fall to let the pickle run off; then they lay the fish with the heads all outward on the ground, and strewing salt between every layer they raise the bulk between 2 or 3 feet or higher if pinched for room. Thus they remain for 21 days, if in the summer, and 15 or 16 if in the winter; then they take them, shake off the salt and wash them at least twice (if possible) in fresh water, until they are perfectly clean; after this they are brought to the yard where the presses are, and having filled them in casks (in which they are closely packed) having holes in them to let out the water, blood and oyle, they are thus pressed; those casks are all placed in a row against the press wall, being supported on wooden stands which prevent the bottoms from being pressed out, on the top of each cask is

⁸³ Smith, 1750, i, 292-3.

⁸⁴ Smith, 1750, ii, 310-11.

placed a round piece of timber or plank an inch thick, somewhat less than the head of the cask, which they call bucklers, these bucklers are squeezed in by placing one end of a pole or leaver in a hole made in the wall for that purpose and by applying weights at the outward end, these bucklers are forced into the cask; as the Pilchards are squeezed down, the barrels are again filled up, and so again till they can hold no more; under the casks are convenient receptacles to hold the oyl,⁸⁵ blood and water; the oyl is got by scumming off the top. The fish being thus pressed, the barrels are headed and sent to market.

Towards the last years of this fishery, the coast was frequented by numbers of French fishing vessels, who fished with very large drift nets which as it was apprehended prevented the fish from coming into our S.W. bays. Some Bantry boats ran off to sea, and cut the nets in the night and this was done two or three years successively.

The above account of the Pilchard Fishery I had from a Gentleman who was concerned in it some years.

Smith's account is interesting for several reasons, quite apart from his detailed description of the method of capturing and processing the fish, which should be compared with the description given by Couch of the Cornish Fishery.⁸⁶ The similarity in the two descriptions is striking. Again we have evidence of the seine-net fishermen's opposition to the introduction of the drift net by the French fishing fleets, but apparently unlike the Kinsale men in 1671, the Bantry fishermen decided to try and drive off the French by destroying their nets as often as possible. It is interesting to note the description of the oil obtained from the presses, which formerly had considerable value.

In addition to his detailed account of the pilchard fishery of Bantry Bay, Smith mentioned two other localities in the county where pilchards were taken. As regards Courtmacsherry Bay, he stated—

The bay affords various kinds of sea fish and formerly pilchards were taken in it and on the shore are several buildings, called in the country Fish Palaces for curing that fish.⁸⁷

He also remarked with reference to Sherkin Island—

About a mile south are the remains of an ancient abbey, founded Anno 1460 for the Franciscans by Florence O'Driscoll, built after the model of Kilreea, but this is much smaller. The steeple is a low square tower, from whence runs the nave of the church, with an arcaded wing to the south. Some parts of the building are slated having been used for fish houses when the pilchards frequented the coast.⁸⁸

It has been suggested that the Franciscans actually engaged in the pilchard fishery, but this is certainly erroneous. The Friary buildings may have been used as a curing house, but only after the dissolution of

⁸⁵ This is the train oil mentioned by Lansdowne, p. 32.

⁸⁶ Jonathan Couch, *A history of the Fishes of the British Islands*. London, 1864, iv, 88-91.

⁸⁷ Smith, 1750, i, 254.

⁸⁸ Smith, 1750, i, 290.

the monasteries. Westropp⁸⁹ mentioned that Lionel Beecher of Sherkin used the Friary as a curing house in the pilchard fishery worked by his son-in-law, Randall Westropp, and Robert Travers until 1769. The caretaker of Sherkin Abbey, which at present is in the charge of the Board of Works (National Monuments Section) states, however, that the main buildings of the Abbey were not so used, but only an outbuilding some twelve yards from the eastern side of the Abbey buildings.⁹⁰ The fish palaces mentioned by Smith as existing in Dunmanus Bay near Dunmanus Castle were, no doubt, used for curing pilchards.⁹¹

The *Parliamentary Gazetteer of Ireland*, which has a vast amount of miscellaneous information on Ireland, has the following reference to Bantry:—

About the middle of last century an extraordinary success in the pilchard fishery and considerable success in other fishery departments raised the town to a highly thriving condition . . . Fish palaces were built in many of the creeks and sheltered shores of the bay; several thousand pounds worth of pilchards were exported to Spain, Portugal and Italy. But about 80 years ago the staple fishery so totally failed that not a pilchard could be seen and the town sank into decline and penury.⁹²

There was, no doubt, some fishing for pilchards in the first half of the eighteenth century, but, as we have seen from Smith, the main decline set in earlier than the date mentioned in the *Parliamentary Gazetteer*.

In a history of Kerry, written about the years 1752–4, which has, rightly or wrongly, been attributed to one, Friar O'Sullivan, of Muckcross Abbey, near Killarney, Co. Kerry, the author has the following note regarding Kenmare Bay:—

This river is further noted as being a safe harbour for ships by its good anchorage, bold shores, and commodious outlets such as Sneem Cilemaculoge Agroom Poulmanrach Cialanaruhand and for its being a good river some seasons for the fishing of haak, herrings, pilcher etc.⁹³

He also stated that in the River Sheen where it discharges into the sea a seal, salmon, trout, cod, hake, herring, pilchards and sprats were taken in one haul.⁹⁴ As the Marquis of Lansdowne noted, however, this event has no modern parallel; the seal, salmon and trout may still be captured there but not the other species.⁹⁵

⁸⁹ T. J. Westropp, "Fortified headlands and castles on the south coast of Munster." *Proc. Roy. Irish Acad.*, 32, C, 6, pp. 100–1.

⁹⁰ This information was confirmed by Rev. E. J. Lambe, c.c., Sherkin Island.

⁹¹ Smith, 1750, i, 284.

⁹² *Parliamentary Gazetteer of Ireland*. Dublin, 1846, i, 222.

⁹³ "Ancient History of the kingdom of Kerry by Friar O'Sullivan of Muckcross Abbey." *Cork Hist. Soc. Jn.*, series 2, vi, 149.

⁹⁴ *Cork Hist. Soc. Jn.*, series 2, vi, 149.

⁹⁵ Lansdowne, pp. 145–6.

Pilehard fishing in the year 1756 was apparently not very successful, and the exports only amounted to 119 hogsheads.⁹⁶ Smith in his statistical survey of county Kerry stated in the same year—

The pilehard fishery was some years ago carried on, in the river of Kenmair, with great success, in which river are several fishing boats, as there are also in Dingle Bay, but the pilehards having quited this coast, these boats are employed in the herring, cod, hake, and other fisheries.⁹⁷

It is interesting to have this confirmation of information from other sources and to note that apparently the pilehard fishery was looked upon as the staple fishery, the herring, cod and hake being exploited merely as a standby. There was no mention of the mackerel, now the important fish along this coast for a considerable part of the year.

That the Irish pilehard fishery had almost disappeared during the period 1755–62 is shown in the export figures. Only 3½ hogsheads of pilehards were exported during those seven years, and, in fact, there was an import of 350 hogsheads, presumably from Cornwall, during the same years.⁹⁸ Additional evidence of the decline as regards Bantry Bay is afforded by an extract, which was written about the year 1759, from the estate books of the 4th Viscount Kenmare, as follows:—

Doonemark.⁹⁹ Set by myself fo Richard Mellefont for three lives . . .

N.B.—This farm lies on the Bay of Bantry has large palaces or receptacles for carrying on a fishery on it, which the tenant's father carried on while the pilehards remained on the coast, and he is himself provided with every convenience in case they return. There is a good harbour for shipping or boats.¹⁰⁰

The decline continued for many years after 1759, and no pilehards were exported in any of the years from 1761 to 1765, inclusive.¹⁰¹ In fact there was an import of pilehards to the extent of 468 hogsheads during that period.¹⁰¹

Three persons, Lionel Beecher, Randall Westropp and Robert Travers, are said to have engaged in pilehard fishing off Sherkin Island up to the year 1769.¹⁰² Whether or not this fishing was prosperous up to that date it is not possible to say, but it does seem probable that it was abandoned because of its unproductiveness. In the year 1783 there were no exports of pilehards from Ireland nor were there any imports.¹⁰³

⁹⁶ *Common's Jn., Ire.*, 1796, vii, celix.

⁹⁷ Charles Smith, *The antient and present state of the county of Kerry*. Dublin, 1756, p. 74.

⁹⁸ John, Lord Sheffield [John B. Holyroyd], *Observations on the manufactures, trade and present state of Ireland*. London, 1785, p. 146. See also Wakefield, ii, 132.

⁹⁹ Doonemark = Donemark about one mile north of Bantry on Bantry Bay.

¹⁰⁰ *The Kenmare Manuscripts*, ed. E. MacLysaght. Dublin, 1942, p. 231.

¹⁰¹ *Common's Jn., Ire.*, 1796, vii, celviii.

¹⁰² Westropp, p. 110.

¹⁰³ Wakefield, ii, 132.

Gough, in his comments on Camden's *Britannia*, has a short note on the pilchard fishery of West Cork. He said—

The town of Bantry at the bottom of one of the noblest bays in the world . . . The Sullivans had formerly several good seats around the bay which is 26 miles long in most places about a league broad and has in the middle 40 fathoms of water and was once famous for a pilchard fishery, now neglected . . . Baltimore is an antient corporation and borough on an excellent harbour, where as well as in the bays of this coast was a great pilchard fishery which has declined with the town ever since the latter was surprised and plundered by the Algerines in 1631.¹⁰⁴

It is clear, however, that the decline in the pilchard fishery at Baltimore was attributable to the lack of fish rather than to the damage done in Baltimore by the Algerine pirates in 1631. At a later date, as we shall see, at least one attempt was made to revive the fishery at Baltimore but without success.

Seward, writing in 1795 on Courtmacsherry Bay, stated that the bay "affords plenty of various kinds of sea fish; formerly pilchards were taken in it and on the shore are several buildings called Fish Palaces for curing that fish."¹⁰⁵ De Latoenaye, to whom reference has already been made, visited Bantry Bay in either 1796 or 1797, and he described Bantry Bay in his reminiscences. He stated—

Whiddy is another island at the extremity of the bay, not as large as the former (i.e. Bere Island) but of an excellent soil. In several parts are walls, which served for the purpose of extricating oil from pilchards which were formerly found here in great plenty.¹⁰⁶

Throughout the eighteenth century the pilchard fishery originally established by Sir William Petty in Kenmare Bay continued to be worked, but at its best it was an uncertain one.¹⁰⁷ Indeed along the whole of the coasts of Cork and Kerry the pilchard fishings in the eighteenth century were relatively unproductive and uncertain.

Nineteenth Century.

The beginning of this century did not bring any improvement in the pilchard fishery in Ireland. There were no exports of cured pilchards,¹⁰⁸ although this may not be significant owing to the wars with the French and the consequent blockade of the Continent by the British Fleet. In

¹⁰⁴ C. W. Camden, *Brittania*, ed. R. Gough. London, 1789, p. 497.

¹⁰⁵ W. W. Seward, *Topographia Hibernica*. Dublin, 1795. See also G. Hansbrow, *An improved topographical and historical Hibernian Gazetteer*. Dublin, 1835, p. 185. Hansbrow published almost without modification the whole of Seward's work (see note by G. P. Farran, "The goaske in Ireland." *Ir. Natur. Jn.*, viii, pp. 145-147).

¹⁰⁶ M. de Latoenaye, i, 168.

¹⁰⁷ Lansdowne, p. 46.

¹⁰⁸ Wakefield, ii, 132.

1810 both Courtmacsherry and Bantry Bay were described as the former resorts of pilchards, but they had been deserted by this fish, with a consequent decline in the fortunes of the inhabitants, particularly of Bantry.¹⁰⁹ During the period of 1819 to 1829 only 40½ barrels of pilchards appear to have received the bounty given by the Government for cured fish at that time. These fish were from the port of Kinsale.¹¹⁰ This would suggest that pilchards were not abundant during that period, but there is evidence that about 1823-4 there were big shoals of pilchards available for capture. At Bantry, for example, pilchards appear to have been taken in great abundance in the year 1823, but they apparently disappeared again for a period, at least up to the years 1835-6.¹¹¹

In the year 1823 or 1824, but probably the former, there was a great take of pilchards on the south side of Galway Bay, but the proper method of curing them was not known. They disappeared from this area for at least the succeeding twelve years.¹¹² About the same time Westport on Clew Bay had a good fishery; in fact the last successful pilchard fishing to be recorded from this area.¹¹³ For a number of years there were no records of pilchards in Ireland. In the winter of 1833-4 large quantities of pilchards were apparently seen off the Irish coast near Cork, and in the spring of 1834 shoals were seen at Youghal before any quantity were taken on the Cornish coast.¹¹⁴ A few pilchards were also said to have been taken in the same years with the herrings off the north coast of Ireland.

Evidence as regards pilchards given in the year 1835, at a series of inquiries into the state of the Irish fisheries, suggests that at various places along the south and west coasts of Ireland from Wexford to Clare they appeared from time to time in a greater or less abundance.¹¹⁵ Pilchards were said to have appeared for the first time within living memory in 1835 off Kilmore Quay and around the Saltee Islands, and the "people did not know their value and there was no means of saving them and great quantities were used as manure." In the region of Cork Harbour pilchards were not taken because the fishermen were not equipped with the gear to pursue the fishery. Further west, at Crookhaven and Dunmanus Bay, the fishermen made no attempt to take these fish, as they

¹⁰⁹ Horatio Townsend, *Statistical survey of the county of Cork*. Dublin, 1810, pp. 228, 395.

¹¹⁰ *Reports of Commissioners for Irish Fisheries* for the years 1819 to 1829.

¹¹¹ *Report of Commissioners of Inquiry into the state of Irish fisheries*. Dublin, 1836, p. 140.

¹¹² *Rep. Fish. Inquiry*, 1836, p. 106.

¹¹³ *Report of the Commissioners appointed to inquire into the sea fisheries of the United Kingdom*. London, 1866, p. 991. Evidence was taken in 1864 in Ireland.

¹¹⁴ John Chester, "Essay on the pilchard." *Rep. Roy. Cornwall Poly. Soc.*, 1835, p. 103. See also Fox, p. 84.

¹¹⁵ *Rep. Fish. Inquiry*, 1836, pp. 119, 142-4, 151, 167, 178.

considered that the oil from the pilchards ruined the nets beyond the price obtained for their catches. The price of pilchards at Crookhaven was about 2/6 per 100, whereas herrings fetched 3/- to 4/- per 100. The absence of proper gear off the coast of Clare prevented fishermen from exploiting the shoals of pilchards.

Yarrell, whose *History of British Fishes* was published in the year 1836, remarked that, during the passage of that work through the printers, the London newspapers reported the appearance of numerous large shoals of pilchards on the south coast of Ireland, "which the poor fishermen were unable to take advantage of from the want of proper nets and salt."¹¹⁶ It is interesting to note also that Thompson, who only ever saw one pilchard on the Belfast Market, reported that this was captured with some herrings in Belfast Lough on 26 May, 1836.¹¹⁷

The pilchard shoals which first visited the coast of south Wexford in 1835 were still fished for by the local inhabitants in the year 1842.¹¹⁸ Apparently in 1844 considerable numbers of pilchards were to be found in Kenmare Bay, about which it will be necessary to say more later. Our next reference to the pilchard fishery in Ireland is afforded by the *Parliamentary Gazetteer*, published in the year 1846. We are there informed that pilchards were then captured by seines and other nets throughout Dunmanus Bay in from 10 to 30 fathoms of water, and that they were abundant in season on fishing grounds in 45 fathoms extending seven leagues distance parallel to the whole coast in the vicinity of Cork Harbour.¹¹⁹ In County Kerry both Tralee and Brandon Bays were said to yield pilchards,¹²⁰ and we have further evidence of the establishment of a pilchard fishery at Kilmore Quay and the Saltee Islands.¹²¹ None of the reports of the Fishery Commissioners from the year 1842 to 1863 mentions the pilchard in Irish waters, so we may assume that it was not very plentiful during those years,¹²² although some pilchards did come into Bantry Bay about 1860-1.¹²³

Tomás Ó Criomhthain in his reminiscences stated that when he was a boy of eight in 1864 (he was born in 1856) the pilchard was the commonest fish off the Blasket Islands. He also stated that they were full of bones and very much like herrings. The fishermen "hadn't a good word to say for them" as they were small fish, "a lot going to the pound, and

¹¹⁶ William Yarrell, *A history of British Fishes*. London, 1836, ii, 109.

¹¹⁷ W. Thompson, *The Natural History of Ireland*. London, 1856, iv, 177.

¹¹⁸ Mr. and Mrs. S. C. Hall, *Ireland. Its scenery and character*. London, 1842, i, 150.

¹¹⁹ *Parliamentary Gazetteer*, i, 509-10.

¹²⁰ *Parliamentary Gazetteer*, ii, 354.

¹²¹ *Parliamentary Gazetteer*, ii, 531.

¹²² *Rep. of Commissioners of Irish Fisheries, 1842-1863*. [Some of these reports were published in the *Rep. of the Commissioners of Public Works in Ireland*.]

¹²³ *Rep. Fish. Inquiry*, 1866, p. 957.

moreover they rotted the nets."¹²⁴ In the same year pilchards were said to have been taken in the Dingle coastguard district, which, incidentally, included the Blasket Islands,¹²⁵ and to be in large quantities outside Dunmore Harbour, where they were not subjected to a fishery, as the fishermen had no means of taking them.¹²⁶ As regards the Wexford coast, pilchards were said in 1864 to visit the area from about August 1, sometimes in large quantities.¹²⁷ The local fishermen were not acquainted with the Cornish pilchard seine, and although large shoals had been seen they fluctuated very considerably.¹²⁷ Owing to the lack of fish in Kenmare Bay the pilchard fishery was apparently not successful between the years 1844 and 1864, the year 1844, as already mentioned, being a good one.¹²⁸

In the year 1865 pilchards were apparently scarce, as they were only recorded as having been taken in the Skibbereen Coastguard District, which included the towns of Crookhaven, Baltimore and Schull.¹²⁹ Here they were said to have been taken in seines from June to September. During the following year pilchards were again taken in the Skibbereen District, and also near Castletownbere and in the Dingle District, although it is clear that the quantities were not very large.¹³⁰ Again in 1867 pilchards were scarce. They were taken in the Skibbereen District, but probably in small numbers,¹³¹ and in the following two years they were not recorded as having been captured on the Irish coasts. Andrews, writing in the year 1869, stated that during the month of October, 1868, the small fry of pilchards were met with in great quantities in Dingle and Ventry Harbours and the Short Strand.¹³²

In 1870 the shoals of pilchards apparently reappeared in strength along the coasts of County Cork, where, unfortunately, for the want of sufficient and suitable gear for capturing and curing this fish, the local inhabitants were unable to avail themselves fully of the "riches brought to their very doors."¹³³ In the succeeding year (1871) the pilchards showed further increases along the south and south-western coasts of Ireland. The Inspectors of Irish Fisheries in their report for that year stated:—

A considerable diminution having taken place in the capture of pilchards on the Cornish coast for some years previous to 1870, and prices having risen largely in

¹²⁴ Tomás Ó Criomhthain, *An t-Oileánach*. Dublin, 2nd edition, p. 17, or *The Islandman*, translated by Robin Flower. Dublin, 1934, p. 14.

¹²⁵ *Rep. Fish. Commission.*, 1864, p. 15.

¹²⁶ *Rep. Fish. Inquiry*, 1866, p. 880.

¹²⁷ *Rep. Fish. Inquiry*, 1866, pp. 875-6.

¹²⁸ *Rep. Fish. Inquiry*, 1866, p. 939.

¹²⁹ *Rep. Fish. Commission.*, 1865, p. 17.

¹³⁰ *Rep. Fish. Commission.*, 1865, p. 16-19. See also John Hoare "The resources of the sea fisheries of Ireland," *Jour. R. Dublin Soc.*, v, 9, in which he stated that there were large quantities of pilchards near Crookhaven but few were captured.

¹³¹ *Rep. Fish. Commission.*, 1867, p. 14-15.

¹³² W. Andrews, "On the Ichthyology of the South West coast." *Jour. R. Dublin Soc.*, v, 382.

¹³³ *Rep. Inspectors of Irish Fisheries*, 1870, p. 6, and Fox, p. 84.

consequence in the foreign markets—four pounds per hogshead being frequently realised—two of us proceeded to Cornwall to learn the system of capture and cure, in the hope that on those parts of the south and south-west coast of Ireland frequented by pilchards, fisheries might be established. We found from Kinsale to Dingle in numerous places this fish came in enormous quantities. We afforded every requisite information with regard to capture and cure, and some enterprises would probably have been set on foot only that this year the pilchard again appeared on the coast of Cornwall in such vast quantities that it was impossible to cure the amount taken. Of nearly 50,000 hogsheads cured a large number had to be sold at prices which did not pay the expenses, and many thousands of hogsheads are still remaining¹³⁴ unsold in the Italian ports.

Ireland has the advantage of the arrival of the pilchard at a much earlier period than in Cornwall, so that if there was sufficient enterprise the fish caught in the Irish coast could be usually shipped a month before that taken on the coast of Cornwall. Should the effort which we understand is being made by persons engaged in the Cornish fishery to induce a consumption of fresh pilchards in the London and other large English markets¹³⁵ succeed, this fish may become of as much importance on the south coast of Ireland as the mackerel.

At present they are not only held in little estimation, but are frequently avoided by the fishermen on account of the injury done to their nets by the oil exuding from the fish. This could, however, be prevented, if the same appliances for properly preserving the nets were used, as are employed in Cornwall.¹³⁶

The actual detailed reports from the various Coastguard Divisions showed that from Ballyvoile Head, east of Dungarvan Harbour, to Galway Bay pilchards were plentiful during 1871.¹³⁷ At one place (Smerwick Harbour) the coastguard officer reported: ‘Fancy a pile of pilchards, thirty-five feet from the base to the centre, on Smerwick Strand and not even cars sufficient to take them away.’¹³⁷

In 1872 large shoals of pilchards appeared on the coasts of Cork and Kerry, but the fishermen avoided their capture to prevent injury being done to the nets by the quantity of oil exuded by the pilchard,” the nets not being properly barked to resist the effects.”¹³⁸ The Inspectors reported that there was little demand in the home markets for pilchards on account of the oily flavour when fresh. Again, the detailed reports from the various Coastguard Districts showed that along the coasts of Ireland from Kinsale to Lackglass in County Clare pilchards were fairly abundant, except that they do not seem to have appeared in very large quantities in Bantry and Kenmare Bays.¹³⁹

During the following year (1873) the shoals of pilchards appeared to be very large, but there was no regular fishery for them. Despite

¹³⁴ This report is dated 6 August, 1872, i.e. almost a year after the closure of the fishing season when even new stock would be forthcoming.

¹³⁵ This plan certainly did not succeed, as even in the “palmy” days of the Cornish Pilchard Fishery the fish seldom found their way nearer to London than the city of Plymouth.

¹³⁶ *Rep. Insp. Irish Fish.*, 1871, p. 6.

¹³⁷ *Rep. Insp. Irish Fish.*, 1871, pp. 18–23.

¹³⁸ *Rep. Insp. Irish Fish.*, 1872, p. 10.

¹³⁹ *Rep. Insp. Irish Fish.*, 1872, pp. 44–47.

attempts by the authorities to encourage the curing of these fish nothing was done, and vast shoals of pilchards were "suffered to pass without almost an appreciable part being taken compared to what might be."¹⁴⁰ The pilchard was apparently well extended around the coast from Ballycotton, Co. Cork, to Dooghbeg, Co. Mayo.¹⁴¹

The report of the Inspectors of Irish Fisheries for the year 1874 stated—

Pilchards.

Vast shoals of the fish frequented the coasts and bays of Cork and Kerry during 1874 but the quantity captured as compared with what might have been taken was comparatively small. Still it is satisfactory to find that although this fish is not appreciated as it deserves to be, yet the residents along the shores are gradually getting over their prejudices against it, and in some localities small quantities which were cured in pickle obtained a ready sale at remunerative prices. In Bantry Bay, inside Whiddy Island, numerous shoals appeared from July up to January of this year (1874). One of the coastguard officers in Kerry reports that "such quantities of pilchards have been landed this year at Kenmare that they have been carted away for manure by every person who cared to take them." It is deplorable that the vast wealth offered by this fish for some years past has not been availed of, more especially as during some seasons, including the two last, the quantity taken in Cornwall has been insufficient to meet the foreign demand. Ireland could well have supplied it if means had been only taken to utilize the splendid gift suffered to go to waste. Independent of the large export trade that might be carried on in the cured fish, a large quantity of valuable oil might be obtained even if no other use was made of the pilchard than to press it, after which the refuse could be converted into good manure. At a very moderate calculation the county Cork might in the last ten years have realized many thousands of pounds sterling of clear profit if proper means had been taken for the capture and utilization of this valuable fish, so prized in England and disregarded in Ireland.¹⁴²

The range of the pilchard in 1874 appeared to be from Ballycotton to the estuary of the River Shannon, somewhat less in extent than in the former year.¹⁴³

During the season of 1875 the pilchard was apparently more abundant than in the previous three or four years, and the Inspectors of Irish Fisheries managed to induce a Cornish gentleman, experienced in the pilchard fishery, to visit Ireland and report on the possibility of the establishment of a company to exploit the available stocks of fish. He carried out an extensive series of inspections, and fixed on the town of Bantry as a suitable place for the commencement of activities. It was thought that a small company with a capital of about £2000 might be set up. Unfortunately, the only capital forthcoming was £1300, none of which was offered from the Bantry area. The feeling of the Cornishman,

¹⁴⁰ *Rep. Insp. Irish Fish.*, 1873, p. 6.

¹⁴¹ *Rep. Insp. Irish Fish.*, 1873, pp. 22-27.

¹⁴² *Rep. Insp. Irish Fish.*, 1874, p. 8.

¹⁴³ *Rep. Insp. Irish Fish.*, 1874, pp. 36-39.

who made the proposal, at this lack of local financial support was that it would not be wise to embark on such a venture unless the local inhabitants were sufficiently interested to contribute at least a part of the capital of the proposed company.¹⁴⁴ Indeed the Inspectors themselves had already reported adversely on the formation of fishing companies, with headquarters away from the main scene of activities and drawing capital from outside sources. They stated, in fact, that the only successful enterprises in this respect were small local fishing companies, managed by practical fishermen, who understood all aspects of the business.¹⁴⁵ An attempt was made by two Bantry persons to cure some pilchards for home consumption in an effort to induce others to do likewise and later to attempt exploitation of the foreign market.¹⁴⁶ Pilchards in 1875 appeared along the whole coast from Kinsale to Lackglass Head in County Clare, with a few fish in Galway Bay.¹⁴⁷ Apparently there was a tendency for the pilchard to be further offshore than in former years.

It was reported in 1876 that pilchard shoals in considerable strength continued to visit the coasts of Cork and Kerry from July to October. At Courtmacsherry, Mill Cove, Barlogue, Union Hall and Castletownshend they appeared in greatest abundance. "At Mill Cove they came so close in, that a good number were captured by small seines drawn in upon the rocks."¹⁴⁸ Apparently by this time an attempt was made to cure pilchards for the home market but not for export, although, as the Inspectors pointed out, in a normal year Italy would take up to 10,000 hogsheads over and above the amount normally supplied by Cornwall. Towards the end of the year a small company was formed, under the managership of Mr. John Cox, a practical pilchard fisherman from Cadgwith in Cornwall, to exploit the shoals of pilchards off the coast of West Cork. With headquarters at Baltimore, which as we have seen was the scene of a pilchard fishery some two centuries previously, the company commenced the erection of curing cellars, and whilst the foundations were being dug the workmen are said to have come "on a deposit of pilchard scales several feet thick," which was an indication of the former importance of Baltimore as a centre of a pilchard fishery.¹⁴⁹

By the year 1877 the pilchards, although still in considerable quantities off many parts of the south and west coasts of Ireland, were not as common as in the previous five years. The fish which actually visited the Irish coasts were further offshore than in the previous seasons and few were

¹⁴⁴ *Rep. Insp. Irish Fish.*, 1875, pp. 6-7.

¹⁴⁵ *Rep. Insp. Irish Fish.*, 1872, p. 8.

¹⁴⁶ *Rep. Insp. Irish Fish.*, 1875, p. 7.

¹⁴⁷ *Rep. Insp. Irish Fish.*, 1875, pp. 32-37.

¹⁴⁸ *Rep. Insp. Irish Fish.*, 1876, p. 6.

¹⁴⁹ Fox, p. 84. At a later date when a road was being constructed it was reported that a similar find was made some distance from the curing house mentioned by Fox.

captured. The Inspectors in their report made the following observations as regards the season's pilchard fishing:—

Off Granfeen station, County Cork, they appeared from August to October. Off Glandore, where in former years great quantities have been seen but few appeared. Off Barloque large quantities were observed, but a distance of from two to three miles from the shore. In the county Kerry at Allihies, Ballycrovane, Kells, Ventry and Ballydavid stations they were seen in some quantity—and at the latter station in Smerwick Harbour, they were close in shore from September to December.

During the year a small company was established for the purpose of carrying on the pilchard fishing and curing; the place selected was Baltimore, near Skibbereen; stores were provided, boats and gear, with experienced fishermen, were brought over from Cornwall; but, unfortunately, their first season has resulted unsuccessfully. It is supposed that unfavourable weather, which affected other sea fishings also, was the cause; but it is to be earnestly hoped that the present year's (1878) operations may prove a success and lead to a much greater development of this important fishing than has yet been attempted.

It appears to be questionable whether the most eligible site has been selected for the operations of this Company; but, doubtless, in previous years immense quantities of Pilchards have appeared in the locality. It may be worth the consideration of those interested in the enterprise, whether it might not be judicious to arrange for information to be sent to Baltimore, from time to time, as to the appearance of shoals of pilchards along the coasts from the various coastguard stations.¹⁵⁰

Fox (1878) refers to this venture in the pilchard fishery, and remarks—

A crew of Cornishmen was taken to Baltimore in 1877 with all the necessary boats and other appliances and remained there during the entire season on the look out but unfortunately the success was so small as that of the Cornish Seine fisheries at home and no fish appeared on the shooting ground.¹⁵¹

The season which followed in 1878 was marked by the appearance of pilchard shoals along many parts of the coasts of Cork and Kerry, particularly the former. The Baltimore Company cured about 300–400 hogshheads of fish, the greater part of which was purchased from local fishermen. For some unexplained reason only about a quarter of the total "cure" was captured by the company's own nets.¹⁵²

In 1879 the Baltimore Company continued to operate, but the season was not successful, and the company was wound up, its plant, fishing gear and salt being sold to Messrs. Richard Beamish, John F. Levis and Richard Carey, local residents, who continued to operate the business of curing herrings and mackerel after the almost complete failure of the pilchard fishery in the locality about 1880. No other attempts were made to cure pilchards for the Italian market, despite the fact that pilchards were to be seen in many places from Dunmore East in Co. Waterford to

¹⁵⁰ *Rep. Insp. Irish Fish.*, 1877, p. 6.

¹⁵¹ Fox, p. 84.

¹⁵² *Rep. Insp. Irish Fish.*, 1878, p. 7.

Ballydavid in Co. Kerry.¹⁵³ The Fishery Inspectors noted that in 1879 the following reports¹⁵³ on the shoals of pilchards had come to hand:—

Dunmore, Co. Waterford.	Shoals of pilchards were seen from nine to thirteen miles from shore.
Ardmore, Co. Waterford.	About one mile off.
Kinsale, Co. Cork.	Captured in very large quantities close in shore.
Horn Strand, ¹⁵⁴ Co. Cork.	Appeared in September and October.
Courtmaesherry, Co. Cork.	" " " " "
Barry's Cove, Co. Cork.	" " " " "
Danny Cove, ¹⁵⁴ Co. Cork.	Large shoals appeared.
Ballydonegan, Co. Cork.	In April and October.
Ballycrome, ¹⁵⁴ Co. Cork.	" " " "
Caherline, Co. Cork.	About ten miles off.
Ballydavid, ¹⁵⁴ Co. Cork.	Appeared from April to end of May and in September and October, about 1 mile off coast.

Why, might we ask, did the Baltimore Company fail? Two reasons can be advanced to explain this lack of success. In the first place, Baltimore, although probably admirably situated for the landing of pilchards which appeared along the Irish coasts in the years from 1870 to 1876, was unsuitable in succeeding years, when the main shoals apparently only appeared at places remote from Baltimore. The Inspectors were probably correct in their remarks as regards the suitability of Baltimore for this purpose (see page 112), but there was no way of ascertaining this with certainty in advance. Secondly, the pilchard shoals, while still of some strength, were declining rapidly in the years 1876 to 1879, and it seems probable that the company would have failed eventually even if it had commenced operations on a more suitable site, say at Bantry.

In 1880 pilchards in considerable quantities appeared off the coasts of Ireland in various places, "though the localities where the fishermen were best prepared for their capture but few were taken."¹⁵⁵ About 50 hogsheads were cured at Baltimore for the Italian market and sold at good prices. From Kinsale to Tralee pilchards were seen in many places, but apparently the numbers were declining.¹⁵⁶ During the following year (1881) pilchards still continued to frequent the south and west coasts of Ireland, but were to be seen farther east than those of the previous few seasons. For example, it was reported that pilchards had appeared in the following places:—

¹⁵³ *Rep. Insp. Irish Fish.*, 1879, p. 8.

¹⁵⁴ Horn Strand has not been identified, but may be Howes Strand in Courtmaesherry Bay; Danny Cove = Dunny Cove; Ballycrome probably Ballycrovane, Co. Cork; Ballydavid is in Smerwick Harbour, Co. Kerry.

¹⁵⁵ *Rep. Insp. Irish Fish.*, 1880, p. 6.

¹⁵⁶ *Rep. Insp. Irish Fish.*, 1880, pp. 12-13.

Co. Waterford:—Off Fethard,¹⁵⁷ from July to September at a distance of $\frac{1}{2}$ mile to 6 miles.

Off Helvick, from August to September, 2 to 4 miles.

Off Ardmore, from June to September, $\frac{1}{4}$ mile off Co. Cork.

Off Old Head, from June to Sept., from 200 yards to a mile.

Off Barlogue, from July to August, at times within 20 yards.

Off Baltimore (small shoals), from July to September, 2 miles.¹⁵⁸

Off Dunny Cove, July and August, 1 mile.

Thirty-five casks only were cured in the Cornish fashion at Baltimore, which sold at Genoa at £3 10s. per cask.¹⁵⁸ There were, in fact, no large captures during the year.

A further decline in the pilchard shoals was apparent by the year 1882, large shoals only being observed off Helvick Head and Ardmore (Co. Waterford) in August and September, sometimes as close inshore as 400 yards; off Old Head of Kinsale and Barlogue (Co. Cork) from June to September, and between Lambs Head and West Cove (Co. Kerry) at the end of August. Fifty-five hogsheads were cured at Baltimore.¹⁵⁹ In 1883 pilchards were apparently present in the region of Baltimore, Bantry Bay and Valentia, but their numbers were not large enough to occasion any special comment.¹⁶⁰ No reports of pilchards along the Irish coasts came to hand during the year 1884,¹⁶¹ whereas in the following year large quantities were taken in herring nets at Ballinacourty (Dungarvan Bay) and Dunmore East, Co. Waterford. These fish were apparently of good quality, but as there was no demand for them they were dumped back into the sea.¹⁶² In their report for 1885 the Fishery Inspectors expressed regret that curing of this fish was not regularly practised, as there was an unsatisfied demand in the Italian market for cured pilchards.¹⁶² They mentioned also that the remains of curing houses were to be seen at Baltimore and Glengarriff and probably elsewhere along the south coast of Ireland.

A small quantity of pilchards was taken in 1886, and that in Dungarvan Bay, where for the want of buyers the fish were thrown back into the sea. In fact, the fishermen of the area appear to have avoided going out to fish with drift nets when it was likely that large numbers of pilchards would be taken.¹⁶³ It was pointed out once again that the pilchard industry might be revived if the fish-dealers showed some enterprise.¹⁶³ In the succeeding two years there were no records of pilchards having captured along the Irish coasts.

¹⁵⁷ Fethard is in Co. Wexford.

¹⁵⁸ *Rep. Insp. Irish Fish.*, 1881, p. 8.

¹⁵⁹ *Rep. Insp. Irish Fish.*, 1882, p. 6.

¹⁶⁰ *Rep. Insp. Irish Fish.*, 1883, pp. 8-9.

¹⁶¹ See *Rep. Insp. Irish Fish.*, 1884.

¹⁶² *Rep. Insp. Irish Fish.*, 1885, pp. 3-4.

¹⁶³ *Rep. Insp. Irish Fish.*, 1886, p. 4.

Pilchards, together with mackerel, appeared from 4 to 10 miles off the coasts of County Waterford in the year 1889, and some were captured in the Youghal Coastguard District, which comprised the coast-line from Ballyvoile Head near Dungarvan to Garryvoe in Ballycotton Bay.¹⁶⁴ The shoals of pilchards were, however, neither plentiful nor large.

In the year 1890 large shoals of pilchards, herring and mackerel appeared about 4 to 8 miles offshore at Bunmahon on the Waterford coast in the late summer and early autumn. Few if any of the pilchards were captured.¹⁶⁵ A few fish were taken by some boats at Ballinacourty, Co. Waterford, but there was no evidence that the fish were very plentiful. At Castletownbere, Co. Cork, on Bantry Bay, pilchards came close inshore in August and September, but they were avoided by the fishermen, as there were no curing facilities nor had they really suitable boats and gear for their capture.¹⁶⁶ During the following year (1891) pilchards appeared off the coasts of County Waterford in several places and a few were captured at Ballinacourty.¹⁶⁷ From 1892 to 1902 there were no reports of pilchards around the Irish coasts.

Twentieth Century.

In August, 1904, Holt, working at the Ardfry Oyster Ponds in Co. Galway, caught a pilchard, and as he was acquainted in general with the history of the pilchard fishery, he arranged to have inquiries made around the coast.¹⁶⁸ These inquiries revealed that pilchards were not being taken or observed in quantity around the Irish coasts during that year. The Rev. W. S. Green noted that the West Cove (Co. Kerry) seine net fishermen had obtained a few in the previous year. A small quantity of pilchards were landed along the Co. Waterford coast in August, 1904, at Dunmore East, Ballinacourty and Helvick Head.¹⁶⁹ At Castletownbere on Bantry Bay a few pilchards were also taken in the same month, mixed with mackerel, but not more than a dozen fish per night's fishing. Holt had considered the possibility that the pilchard shoals were returning to Ireland again in 1904, but the subsequent inquiries showed that this was not the case, the numbers of pilchards present during the year being comparatively small.

From 1904 until the year 1935 the pilchard appeared to have forsaken the Irish coasts, although occasionally during that time an odd pilchard

¹⁶⁴ *Rep. Insp. Irish Fish.*, 1889, p. 26.

¹⁶⁵ *Rep. Insp. Irish Fish.*, 1890, p. 36.

¹⁶⁶ *Rep. Insp. Irish Fish.*, 1890, p. 36.

¹⁶⁷ *Rep. Insp. Irish Fish.*, 1891, pp. 63-4.

¹⁶⁸ *MSS.* in Department of Agriculture, Fisheries Branch, Dublin.

¹⁶⁹ The quantities were Dunmore East, 11½ cwts.; Ballinacourty, 38 cwts.; and Helvick Head, 48 cwts.

might be taken with herrings or mackerel. From 1935 to 1939 a few pilchards were observed off the south coasts, but as there was little demand the fishermen did not attempt to prosecute the fishery except when herrings were scarce, when limited quantities of pilchards were turned into kippers.

In July, 1940, however, it became obvious that the pilchard had again returned in strength to the Irish coasts. There were, for example, big takes of pilchards at Union Hall, Co. Cork, for which there was only a very limited market when herrings were scarce. Most of the fish were, in fact, dumped back into the sea. Pilchards were also landed at Dungarvan, Co. Waterford, and at Canty's Cove, in Dunmanus Bay, Co. Cork, the quantity so taken only amounting to 30 tons, a large part of which was apparently kippered during a period of scarcity of herrings.¹⁷⁰

In 1941 the shoals of pilchards along the coasts of counties Waterford, Cork and Kerry were very large and numerous, apparently being more plentiful than in the previous year. On July 19 quantities of pilchards, estimated to be between 80 and 100 crans, were landed at Glandore, Co. Cork, and ten days later another 150 crans were landed there, only to be dumped owing to lack of a market. Very large quantities of pilchards came into the coast from Dungarvan Bay to Dingle Bay. As there was no market these shoals of fish were not exploited fully. Some 80 tons of pilchards were, however, landed at Dunmore East and Ballinagaul and converted into kippers. Pilchards taken by the autumn mackerel seine nets belonging to boats from Caherciveen, Co. Kerry, were dumped in large numbers owing to the lack of demand. The fishermen from Helvick Head had for several years used old herring drift-nets for the capture of pilchards in order to supply the smoking plants at Dunmore East when herrings were scarce. In 1941 herrings were very scarce around the Irish coasts, and one might have expected that the pilchard would have formed a good alternative, but such was not the case, there being a marked prejudice against the fish in the fresh state. Attempts were made by the Irish Sea Fisheries Association to obtain a sale for fresh pilchards on the Dublin and Cork Markets but without success.

Pilchard shoals which frequented the Irish coasts in 1942 were larger and more numerous than those of the previous year. In August and September large quantities of fish were seen at Castletownbere, Dunmanus Bay, off Helvick Head, and at many other places along the Irish coasts. About 80 tons were landed at Helvick Head, and smaller quantities up to 7 tons at Ballycotton, Canty's Cove and Castletownbere (Co. Cork), and at Dingle (Co. Kerry). These fish found a market, but there were

¹⁷⁰ The account of the fishery which follows is based on the records in the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries Branch and information obtained by correspondence and personal interviews with persons along the south and west coasts of Ireland in recent years.

many landings which had to be dumped. Normally, the fish were taken in July, August and September.

In the following year (1943) the pilchard shoals seem to have ranged more widely than in the previous years, captures having been made as far north as Downings, Co. Donegal. Notwithstanding this the fish were not at all plentiful over the whole of the season, and only just over 30 tons were landed and found a market. The places of landing were Helvick, 9 tons; Kinsale, 9½ tons; Bantry and Dunmanus Bays, 10 tons; Keel, Co. Mayo, 1½ tons; Downings, 2¼ tons. In the year 1944 pilchards had decreased considerably in numbers and the quantities landed were small, but included landings at places as wide apart as Helvick and Kinsale on the one hand, and Galway and the Aran Islands on the other. The total recorded landings were only about 10 tons. Pilchards were, however, observed in the stomachs of small hake taken in Dingle Bay in the month of July by the present writer.¹⁷¹

In connection with the foregoing account of the Irish pilchard fishery in the past five to ten years it must be pointed out that the only information available as to the landings of fish relates to those fish actually placed on the market. Here and there along the coasts small quantities were, no doubt, taken by local inhabitants for home consumption; of those there are, naturally, no records. Dr. Anthony Farrington, Resident Secretary of the Royal Irish Academy, informs me that, whilst on holiday at Helvick, Co. Waterford, in the year 1939, he on several occasions obtained pilchards for the consumption of his family, but the local inhabitants would have nothing to do with the fish, which were, often as not, dumped back into the sea. This seems to be almost typical of the present reaction to the fresh pilchard in Ireland.

Distribution of the pilchard shoals around the Irish coasts.

From the foregoing account of the Irish pilchard fishery it is difficult to obtain a complete picture of the distribution of the pilchard around the coasts of Ireland owing to the mass of detail which has to be assimilated. In Fig. 6 the location of the various fishings (and shoals of pilchards) have been indicated on a sketch-map of Ireland. In order, however, to make the information from recent years more complete some additional material to that considered previously has been included. It will be seen that, although the pilchard when it frequents the Irish coasts does so mainly along the coasts of counties Waterford, Cork and Kerry, it has also been observed (and sometimes captured) in a number of other

¹⁷¹ Arthur E. J. Went, "Note on the food of the Hake (*Merluccius vulgaris* Flem.)." *Ir. Natur. Jour.*, viii, 223.

counties, namely, Wexford, Clare, Galway, Mayo, Donegal, Antrim and Down.

In Figures 2 to 5 the location of the various fishings, during each half-century since the year 1600, have been indicated by a series of symbols.

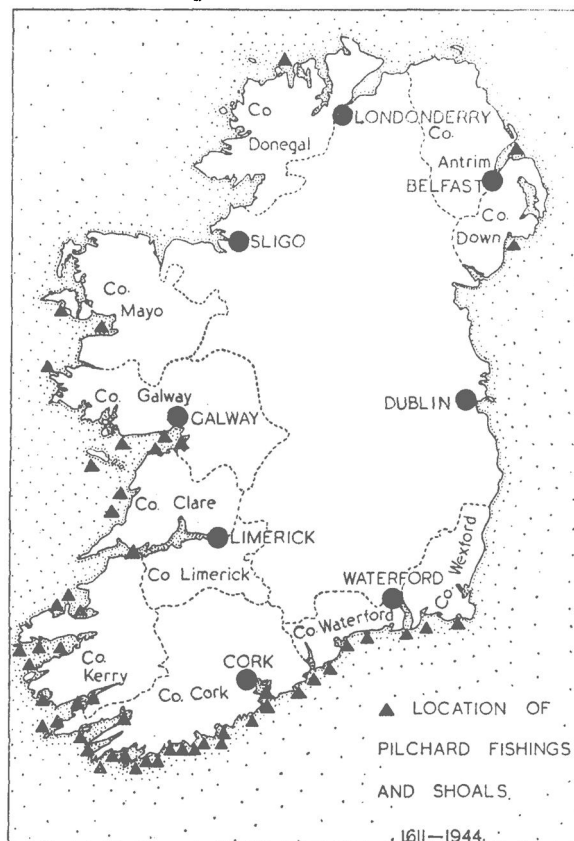


FIG. 6.

“Pilchard years” in Ireland.

It should now be obvious that shoals of pilchards along the Irish coasts in some years were sufficiently large and numerous to support an intensive fishery. The pilchard fishery has always been recognised, even in Cornwall, as one which shows extreme fluctuations, and it is interesting, therefore, to record what years may be regarded as *pilchard years* in Ireland, so that when the history of the Cornish Fishery has been recorded up-to-date we will be in a position to compare the prevalence of good years in Ireland with those in Cornwall. It is possible to draw up a scheme showing with some degree of accuracy the productivity of the pilchard fishery in Ireland since about the year 1611. The results given in the following table have been obtained by consideration of the available historical and other records.

<i>Year.</i>	<i>Condition of the Fishery.</i>
1611	A fishery existed but no information as to its prosperity.
1612-15	A fishery probably existed.
1616	A fishery was prosecuted in West Cork and Waterford.
1617-18	At least a moderately successful fishery existed.
1619-32	A fishery existed, which was probably fairly successful.
1633	No information.
1634	A record fishery.
1635-6	No information.
1637	Pilchards exported showing that a fishery existed but no information as to its prosperity.
1638-39	No information. May have been a failure.
1640	Failure.
1641	Prosperous fishery.
1642-64	No information. During early part of this period there were great disturbances in Ireland.
1665	A fishery existed.
1666-68	A fishery probably existed but no evidence of its prosperity.
1669	A fairly prosperous year.
1670-71	Although no detailed information, a fishery enjoying some success probably existed.
1672-77	A fishery was definitely prosecuted, with varying success.
1690-99	Complete failure.
1700-16	Failure.
1717	Some fishing but no information as to its prosperity.
1718-29	Failure.
1730-33	Fishery existed at least in Bantry Bay but no information as to its prosperity.
1734	Prosperous.
1735-37	Fishery existed at least in Bantry Bay but no information as to its prosperity.
1738	Prosperous.
1739	Fishery existed but no evidence as to its prosperity.
1740	Fishery not prosperous.
1741-45	Fishery existed but no evidence as to its prosperity.
1746	No detailed information but probably a failure.
1747	Generally a failure, although some fish apparently entered Kenmare Bay.
1748-50	Failure.
1751-54	Probably a failure.
1755-65	Failure.
1766-69	There may have been a limited amount of fishing but generally the fishery was a failure.
1770-92	No detailed information but indications are that fishery was a failure.
1793-1822	Failure.
1823 and or 1824.	Good catches of pilchards in Bantry, Galway and Clew Bays.
1825-32	Failure.
1833-34	Large shoals off Irish coasts.
1835	Large shoals off county Wexford.
1836	Pilchards along Irish coasts in some numbers.
1837-41	Failure.
1842	Some pilchards along the south coast of Wexford.
1843	Failure.
1844	Some pilchards at least in Kenmare Bay.
1845-59	Failure.
1860-61	Small numbers of pilchards.
1862-63	Failure.

1864	Pilchards along the coasts of county Kerry.
1865-66	Some pilchards but quantities not large.
1867	Scarce.
1868-69	Failure.
1870-76	Prolific with peak about 1875.
1877-82	Pilchards present along south and west coasts but decreasing in numbers towards the end of the period.
1883	Small shoals only.
1884	Failure.
1885	Large shoals off county Waterford but no where else.
1886	Some pilchards but the numbers were small.
1887-88	Failure.
1889	A few pilchards on the coasts of West Cork and Waterford.
1890	A few pilchards along the south coasts.
1891	A few pilchards along the coast of county Waterford.
1892-1902	Failure.
1903-04	Present in some locations but very scarce.
1905-34	Failure.
1935-39	Small shoals, particularly along coasts of West Cork and Waterford.
1940-43	Very prolific. Peak probably in the year 1942.
1944	Very much smaller shoals than in previous years.

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